25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The Washington Monthly

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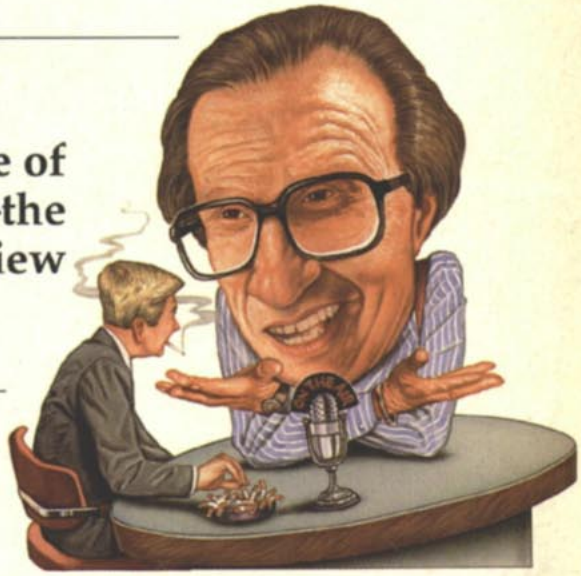

What to fight for—and where to deal—as health care reform goes under the knife

By Jon Meacham and Ted Marmor

How liberals put public school teachers in the line of fire

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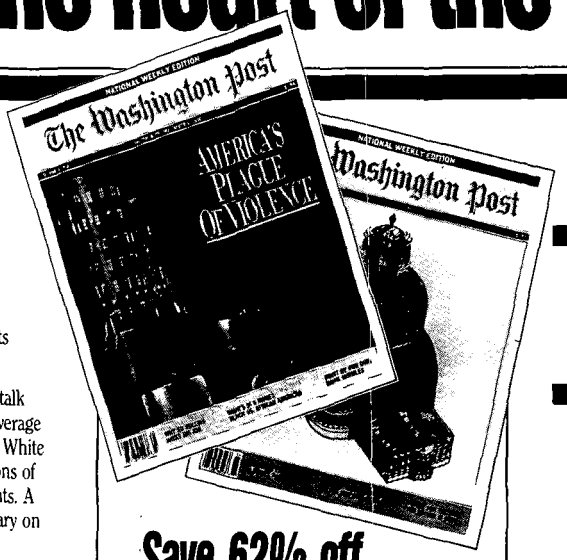

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Letters

Spooked

David Ignatius has been hanging around spooks too long. He makes some excellent suggestions for improving the operations of the bumbling Company ["Reinvent the CIA," April]. But the nation would be better served, and the taxpayers would save roughly $30 billion annually, if we simply dismantled all non-electrical spy activities.

Why? Because secret information is worthless information. The truth emerges only from the unceasing exchange of facts and ideas in the marketplace—with input from scholars, journalists, diplomats, business and labor leaders, and others—and not from hiding isolated bits of information under classification stamps. For example, the truth about the emerging 1990 Iraqi crisis was widely available in the marketplace but was lost somewhere in the labyrinthine bureaucracy.

Indeed, information gets lost because policymakers never listen to their own analysts. All of us bureaucratic veterans can cite many instances when policymakers dismissed advice with some version of, "If you were any good, you wouldn't be working here." Henry Kissinger was the master of this approach, but the quintet who ran the Persian Gulf caper (Bush, Baker, Cheney, Powell, Scowcroft) closely followed the master's example.

Finally, spy operations should go because secret institutions undermine democracy. Remember Richard Nixon?

William M. Burke
San Francisco, CA

Nuts

In his review of *The Mad Among Us: A History of the Health Care of America's Mentally Ill* by Gerald N. Grob [March], Dr. E. Fuller Torrey says that the community mental health movement of the 1960s "operated on the belief that tender loving care and a warm home—as opposed to medication and rehabilitation—were all that patients leaving state mental hospitals needed." Thus, he blames Freud's influence on the American psychiatry since the 1920s for "the social disaster we call deinstitutionalization."

While I agree that deinstitutionalization has gone tragically awry, I think it inaccurate to lay most of the blame on poor Freud. As a medical journalist who covered this misguided development in the care of the mentally ill, I recall that the idea that patients in mental institutions could return to the community and lead relatively normal lives was solidly rooted in the development of psychoactive drugs such as the phenothiazines. This concept, however, was predicated on the existence of halfway houses for those who could not live with their families, and the clinics that would provide both counseling and maintenance medication.

This worthy goal was not met for two reasons: People didn't want mental patients in their communities and failed to provide the necessary support facilities. And second, the recently released patients didn't come looking for their medication because they didn't think they needed it, which shouldn't have surprised anyone familiar with schizophrenia, the condition that affected most patients. The fact that many therapists preferred to treat neurotics rather than psychotics certainly played a part in the failure of deinstitutionalization, but the failure to medicate was just as important.

However, I fully agree with Torrey's assertion that the libertarian climate of the time—rooted in the sensational depiction of mental institutions as snake pits and whorehouses for people whose families don't want them—contributed hugely to the fiasco we now see acted out on the streets all over America. The mentally ill are getting drugs all right, but not the ones envisioned by the deinstitutionalizers.

Matt Clark
New York, NY
The writer is the former medicine editor of Newsweek.

Degrees of Difficulty

Jonathan Cohn's article "Making College Possible" [April] about President Clinton's plan to democratize higher education interested me greatly. Unfortunately, the president is making the wrong reforms: He should be trying to make college more *exclusive*.

Despite the spiraling tuition rates mentioned, college has long been *too* democratized—that is, too open to virtually anyone who wants to attend no matter what level of ability or preparedness. This shows in the steady dumbing down of curricula, the grade inflation, and the influence on campuses of special-interest groups which preach victimhood. The president of the American Federation of Teachers said in an interview a few years ago that 95 percent of Americans attending college would not be admitted anywhere else in the world. The dirty little secret is simply that there are far too many college degrees out there, driving down not only their value but also their hold-

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ers' salaries. Ask the hundreds of thousands of white-collar workers, including scientists and engineers, who have been laid off over the last few years how much their degrees have helped them since. And now, because of "diploma inflation," employers are often telling job applicants that they must have a four-year degree (cost $25,000+) to be able to get a dead-end, entry level job paying $6 per hour ($12,000 per year).

I believe we could profitably adopt the college system found in much of Europe, including Britain. There, tuition is free to college students, paid for by the taxpayers. However, only the best and brightest high school students are admitted after excelling in preparatory courses and passing stiff college entrance exams. Of course, the number of overall places and the number taking each major would have to be sharply limited, though these numbers could be tailored to real needs, and other changes would obviously be necessary. Such a system would by definition not discriminate against anybody regardless of background or income who was really ready for higher education.

For everyone else, public schools would have to be made better so that a high school diploma means something once again (perhaps a vocational skill), and employers should be prohibited from requiring college degrees for jobs that have not traditionally required them. Perhaps tax breaks could be given to employers who create jobs not requiring college. These reforms would be fairer than today's system, which is best described as an increasingly transparent scam. I hope the president will consider changes along these lines.

Edwin Krampitz, Jr.
Drewryville, VA

Circumspection

In their defense of castration as a device for preventing repeated acts of pederasty ["The Case for Castration," May] both Larry Don McQuay and Dr. Fred S. Berlin ignore the deterrent functions of laws prescribing castration. The superiority of castration over other disincentives or punishment rests less on the effect that castration has on the production of testosterone than on the ability of a threat of castration to touch concern that outranks a man's concern for his own life. Unfortunately, this concern is so deep and so general that it prevents a disinterested consideration of laws prescribing mandatory physical castration even for conclusively provable rape, and it dictates a preference for "chemical castration" that virtually eliminates the deterrent and communicative power of laws prescibing castration.

Robert E. Gahringer
Deering, NH

Defining behavior like Larry Don McQuay's as mental illness has become the national solution for avoiding personal responsibility and self-determination. Many in the mental health community continue to undermine basic human morality and values by supplanting them with newly minted "diseases" and "disorders." No doubt Mr. McQuay could satisfy the criteria for a DSM IIIR diagnostic category of pedophilia and/or sexual sadism, legitimizing his behavior as mental illnesss and thereby obliterating personal responsibility and obfuscating criminal intent.

If Mr. McQuay wishes to be castrated, so be it.

Grace A. Whitman
Washington, DC

Correction

In a May article, Jon Meacham incorrectly stated that Amy Nathan practices law with Akin Gump. She left that firm several years ago and currently practices with another Washington firm, Mayer, Brown and Platt. We regret the error.

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Tilting at Windmills

Those who suspect laws to protect the disabled may have gone a little too far will have their suspicion confirmed by this Associated Press story from Los Angeles: "The city has ordered an adult nightclub to remove a showroom shower because disabled nude dancers would be unable to get their wheelchairs into it."

There is no evidence that the nightclub had any disabled nude dancers or that any had even applied for employment. "If an able-bodied person could have been up there doing it, a disabled person should have been able to, also," said Ron Shigeta, chief of the Los Angeles building department's disabled-access division, who added, "That's what it comes down to—you're denying people the opportunity." . . .

If we institute term limits nationally, what will be their effect on incumbents who have reached the limit? The answer comes from California, whose state officials are now subject to term limits. What's happening is the incumbents are not retiring from public office; they're merely running for other jobs. A time-expired state senator runs for lieutenant governor; an assemblyman in similar straits runs for sheriff. The result is not an infusion of new blood but a game of musical chairs that simply puts the old gang in new positions. . . .

In Washington, the question being asked is why, even in the absence of term limits, so many congressional incumbents are choosing not to run again. I found one answer, given by George Will and Cokie Roberts on a recent David Brinkley show, less illuminating about the early retirements than about the values of the media elite. Will said, "the pay isn't good." Roberts agreed "the pay is bad." Congressmen make $133,600 per year. That's about four times what the average American *family* earns and would only seem "bad" to people who are hopelessly out of touch with the average American.

Another recent indication of the lifestyle of the media elite was provided by *Newsweek*'s story about the magazine's move to another building in New York City. The advantage of the move, according to the editor, is that this new neighborhood is more varied. The disadvantage: "Saks Fifth Avenue and the Four Seasons are no longer a five-minute walk away." . . .

The Senate recently voted 53 to 44 to preserve its free reserved parking lot at National Airport. The public pays $26 a day for a similar parking space. The senators say the privilege is justified because they're very busy doing good deeds for the public. But aren't a lot of the rest of us very busy, too? And a lot of people besides senators try to do good and to serve the public interest. Why shouldn't they have free reserved parking if the senators do? That such a thought might occur to their constituents crossed the minds of senators in the most

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immediate peril of such a possibility is suggested by the fact that 22 of the 26 senators up for reelection this year voted against the free parking perk.

My guess is that the senators who voted for the free parking have made a serious error. This is something voters will get mad about. Especially after they read this letter—for which I'm indebted to *The Washington Post*'s Mike Causey—from a retired civil servant who obviously felt he too had served the public interest and wondered why he didn't get free parking, as well:

"I took someone to National Airport this winter. We parked what seemed like miles from the terminal. Killing time before her flight, I checked the VIP parking spaces near the main terminal. A group of teenagers in a Mercedes (A MERCEDES!) with congressional tags were unloading what looked like skiing equipment. I videotaped it. The next week I was back at the airport and the car was still there. The tag was visible, but it was covered with ice and snow and didn't appear to have been moved.

"I was back four days later. The congressional Mercedes was still there. I went to National the next day (one of the joys of retirement is that people think you have nothing better to do than meet them at the airport), and the car was gone. That means it was there at least 11 days, and the children of the elite enjoyed what would have cost an ordinary citizen $286 in parking fees."

Here is the list of Democrats who did not get the point and voted in favor of this free reserved parking:

Akaka, Baucus, Biden, Breaux, Bumpers, Campbell, DeConcini, Daschle, Dodd, Dorgan, Exon, Ford, Harkin, Heflin, Hollings, Inouye, Johnston, Leahy, Levin, Mathews, Metzenbaum, Mitchell, Mikulski, Moseley-Braun, Murray, Nunn, Pell, Pryor, Reid, Rockefeller, Simon.

Since this list includes some of my most respected friends in the Senate, I print it with regret. So I hope the good guys get a good scare and not defeat in the next election. But something has to wake them up to the fact that the rest of us want our representatives to have the same problems we do. . . .

There is no better example of congressional insulation than health care. I dream of the day when all of the talk show hosts ask—as a few have begun to do—why the rest of us don't get the same kind of health care Congress does. Not only do the members have one of the most generous health insurance programs in the country but, for an additional fee of $520 per year for senators and $275 for congressmen, they get, according to *The Washington Post*'s Kevin Merida, "physical exams, physical therapy, X-rays, electrocardiograms, immunizations, pap smears, prescriptions, referrals to specialists and other primary care services on-site from the Capitol physician." There is a special ambulance on call at the Capitol as well as access to bargain-priced care at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Naval Medical Center at Bethesda. . . .

And remember George Will's dismissiveness about six-figure congressional salaries? That disdain is more easily understood when you consider that Will routinely charges $15,000 to speak before groups which happen to have vested interests in how

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—Eugene J. McCarthy

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Washington forms its conventional wisdom. In May, for example, Will gave a paid lecture to the Health Insurance Association of America, the lobby that funded the "Harry and Louise" ads eviscerating the Clinton plan.

When *The Washington Post*'s Howard Kurtz asked Will whether he saw a conflict between accepting steep fees from insurers when he regularly comments on health reform (and in fact takes the group's line that there is no health coverage crisis), Will said no. His argument? There's no reason to tell readers and viewers who pays him what because, unlike government officials, he doesn't "exercise the power of the state." But don't you think Will, from his opinionmaking perch on television, has the effective power of at least 10 congressmen?. . .

When Robert Reischauer, the director of the Congressional Budget Office, was asked to explain why it took his staff 12 weeks to work up the numbers on the Cooper-Breaux health bill, he replied it was because his staff was so small. Senator Bradley then asked why the CBO had not sought help from number crunchers in the executive branch, of whom Reischauer had noted there are thousands. Reischauer avoided answering. The reason he did is that there wouldn't be any need for the CBO and many other congressional staffers if Congress made effective use of the information-gathering potential of the executive branch.

The reason Congress doesn't do this is that as a result of the Johnson administration's lies about Vietnam, Nixon's about Watergate and practically everything else, and the subsequent elaborate deceptions carried out by such shell game operators as David Stockman and Richard Darman, Congress stopped trusting facts supplied by the executive branch. The CBO was established, and other fact-gatherers and checker-uppers were hired. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, the size of congressional staffs tripled while most of the rest of the government stayed roughly the same.

The *Monthly*'s solution to the problem, which we've being offering for more than a decade, is to require all executive branch witnesses to swear to the truth of the information they provide Congress. Less than 10 percent of their testimony is under oath now. The solemnity of the oath will remind decent (and cagey) officials of their duty to tell the truth. And few, certainly not wise guys like Stockman and Darman, will risk a perjury indictment. So Congress will not only get accurate information but will be able to reduce its staff. . . .

Not having heretofore considered English professors as being especially randy, I was astonished to learn that in a survey of 30,000 male and female faculty members, 20 percent of the members of English departments complained of sexual harassment as compared to 8 percent of those in mathematics and statistics. I know you're saying more women go into English than math, but these figures are *percentages*. By the way, for those of you who believe men tend to get overheated more than women, the survey says you're right. Fifteen percent of the female faculty said they had been harassed while only 3 percent of males complained. . . .

Want to know one reason so many doctors hate the Clinton health plan? They don't want to

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pay for health insurance for their employees. According to a study done for *Money* magazine by the Harvard Medical School Center for National Health Program Studies, "49 percent of workers employed by doctors with their own practices are not offered health insurance." . . .

Some of the 23 soldiers who died at Pope Air Force Base would have escaped the fireball if it had not been greatly intensified by JP-4 jet fuel the Air Force was using despite the fact that it had been abandoned years ago by the Navy and by commercial airlines.

As long ago as the Vietnam War, fuel fires and explosions were, according to *The New York Times,* "far more likely with JP-4 than any other fuels." By the mid-1970s the Navy and commercial airlines had stopped using JP-4.

Why did it take the Air Force another 20 years to eliminate this obvious danger to service personnel? Because commercial airlines were fearful that a switch to safe fuels by such a gigantic consumer as the Air Force would cause the price of those fuels to increase. So in order to protect themselves from the possibility of higher costs, the commercial airlines were willing to see servicemen die. Six years ago an Air Force general wrote, "In recent years, we have lost three B-52s, two C-5s, two other KC-10s, [he said other because a KC-10 had just burned] an F-4 and a C-130 in similar accidents attributed to the use of JP-4."

What would the safer JP-8 have meant to the the solders running away from the Pope fireball? JP-8 spreads at the rate of 10 meters a minute while JP-4 races 230 meters in the same 60 seconds. . . .

George Will: Wa$hington's favorite pundit

During the 1980s, the CIA should have been getting better. Its budget grew by leaps and bounds; its number of employees increased by a third. Yet by now practically everyone knows that Aldrich Ames' treachery began in 1985 and went undetected for the rest of the decade. And most of us are aware of the agency's failure to prevent the 1985 escape to Moscow of former CIA agent Eddy Lee Howard and the 1987 redefection of the KGB's Vitaly Yurchenko, who slipped away from his CIA handlers by saying he had to go the men's room. But did you also know that during much of the eighties, the CIA agents in Cuba and in East Germany were doubled, telling their Communist bosses what we were interested in and telling us only what the other side wanted us to hear?. . .

I was thinking this April of a lovely line of poetry—I can't for the life of me remember from where—"daffodils that come before the swallow dares," because this spring it would have taken a very shiftless swallow not to have beaten the daffodils by several weeks. Indeed it seems to me that we have a trend toward late appearances by the daffodils and forsythia and earlier blooming of azaleas, dogwood, and other trees and shrubs. It used to be that about six weeks elapsed between the flowering of the forsythia and the appearance of leaves on most of the trees. Now it all happens so close together that you still see the yellow of the daffodils and forsythia when the greening of the trees begins. An incidental result of all this, at least in Washington, was a record amount of pollen, which was bad news for hay fever victims. Is there any nature lover out there who has an explanation of why this is happening, of why spring is happening to everything at once? . . .

West Virginia's tax authorities, because coal companies have so much power over the assessment process, value the state's mineral wealth, including its vast reserves of coal, at only $2.2 billion.

Roman Genn

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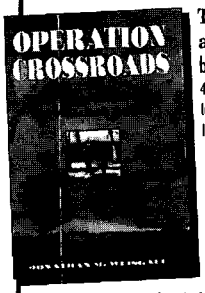

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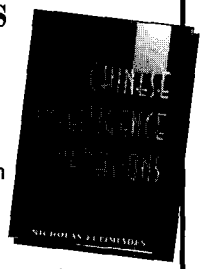

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Estimates of the recoverable coal in West Virginia's hills range from 36 billion to 54 billion tons. The royalty paid to the landowner when coal is mined from his property is 5 percent or more. So, at the current selling price of coal of $28 a ton, the coal should be appraised at $50 billion. *The Charleston Gazette* estimates that this property valuation would yield $450 million in additional tax revenues from coal companies alone. Since two-thirds of property tax revenues go to education, this sum would be more than enough to rescue the state school system from the Third World condition to which the indifference of out-of-state coal barons long ago consigned it. . . .

Speaking of coal mines, I want to congratulate Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, who not only recently went down into a mine— which I've long contended cabinet members and the rest of the Washington elite only do in the event of a disaster or a political campaign—but also for appointing J. Davitt McAteer as the nation's chief mine safety official. McAteer was born in a mining town, has written about mine safety for this magazine, and has never displayed the slightest indication of being sold out to the coal barons. . . .

And speaking of the property tax, Michigan and Wisconsin have moved to replace it as the principal means of funding schools. Several other states are seriously considering similar moves. There are sensible reasons for taking this step, mainly that it can reduce the gap between poorer and richer school districts by spreading the revenue from state-wide taxes around evenly, as county-collected property taxes usually fail to do. But I would caution everyone involved to remember that property taxes are an important element in the overall tax system. West Virginia explains why wealth can be hoarded in real property. The wealth tied up in the land grows as property values increase. That wealth is just as real as the wealth that comes from salaries, interest, and dividends and should be taxed accordingly. See "Surprise: The Property Tax Could Be Good For You," Joseph Nocera, May 1978. . . .

The Veterans Administration operates 171 hospitals, many of them underused. Yet in what congressional observers say is a classic example of the power a committee chair can wield, only one of those hospitals has been closed in the 14 years that Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery has been chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee—and that one had to be shut down because of earthquake damage. . . .

I hope Arthur Levitt, the new chairman of the SEC, will take action in response to an anonymous memo that is being distributed at the agency. The document charges that the SEC wastes time in endless reviews of even the most routine actions and that rigid middle managers live by the rule of "that's the way we do things." I also hope that Al Gore will realize that this news is true of many other agencies in the government, and the result is, as Cindy Skrzycki's report of the memo in *The Washington Post* puts it, "the best people are driven out."

Another *Post* article, by *Monthly* alumnus Christopher Georges, tells why bright young Clinton recruits have already left the administration, quoting one as saying: "I wasn't doing anyone in America any good. . . I was buried

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in the Treasury bureaucracy, one of about 30 people who took part in an endless series of meetings... It was depressing."

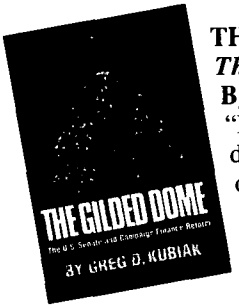
The greatest single reform Gore could make would be to cut the number of meetings in government in half. When an agency is young and vital, meetings are rare because people are too busy getting things done to attend meetings or to—and here's the other greatest waste of time—write long memoranda....

To reform government, we need for Bill Clinton and Al Gore to try to eliminate the unnecessary meeting and memos, but we also need a little more courage from the bright youngsters who decide to quit too soon. Instead of quitting, why not try to change things? Why not refuse to attend pointless meetings? Maybe you'll get fired. But instead of quitting like a coward, why not be brave and try to do things right?...

Make believe is, as this magazine never tires of pointing out, the organizing principle of American government. The latest evidence is buried on page 51 of the May 23rd issue of *Time*. It concerns a 1982 law that required military prisons to notify the victim of a crime when the perpetrator is scheduled for release. Last year a Pentagon survey of 13 prisons discovered that not one was complying with the law. The predictable result occurred in 1990 when a Kentucky woman named Andrea Turner was shot five times in the back and killed by her soldier-husband, who had been released three days earlier from a prison term imposed because of his previous abuse of his wife. Washington's make believe is its firm conviction that something has happened when a law is passed when in fact nothing happens until the law is carried out. Reality lies in the implementation, which Congress investigates all too rarely....

Senator Harris Wofford is trying to stop another governmental insanity. It is the biennial custom of senators to move into new offices. Every two years, when senators retire or are defeated, other senators with seniority move into the vacated space if it is at all preferrable to their own. Then still other senators move into the offices the movers have vacated. This cost $859,000 in 1993 alone. Even sillier is the time Senate staff members waste in moving. Which office should Jennifer get? On which wall should we hang the picture of the state capital? Am I close enough to the senator's personal office?...

—*Charles Peters*



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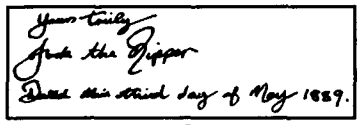

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The Data Game

Inside the numerical voodoo in all those food studies you read about

BY CYNTHIA CROSSEN

The year: 2173. Two scientists talk about a man who has just been roused from a 200-year sleep.

"For breakfast, he requested something called wheat germ, organic honey, and tiger's milk."

"Oh, yes, those were the charmed substances that some years ago were felt to contain life-preserving properties."

"You mean there was no deep fat, no steak or cream pie or hot fudge?"

"Those were thought to be unhealthy, precisely the opposite of what we now know to be true."

"Incredible."

—*Woody Allen,* Sleeper

People know how to discount some kinds of information. We usually would not take too seriously a claim by the maker of Quick 'n Crispy Crinkle Cut Fries that "In a nationwide taste test, you preferred the crispiness of Quick 'n Crispy Crinkle Cut Fries, 3 to 1." Similarly, when the *National Examiner* publishes a story saying, "You can slash your cholesterol level [as much as 30 percent], strengthen your heart and add years to your life with a daily can of 7-Up," many people would, rightly, not stop taking their cholesterol medication. We tend to give more weight to surveys, studies, and polls reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Time*, *The New York Times*, the network news shows, or *The Wall Street Journal*. Yet even forums like these have been slow to recognize how dubious is much of the research they publish.

People know enough to be suspicious of some numbers in some contexts, but we are at the mercy of others. We have little personal experience or knowledge of the topics of much modern research, and the methodologies are incomprehensibly arcane. Nevertheless, we respect numbers, and we cannot help believing

Cynthia Crossen is a writer and editor at The Wall Street Journal. *Copyright © by Cynthia Crossen. Adapted from the forthcoming book* Tainted Truth, *to be published by Simon and Schuster Inc. Reprinted with permission.*

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them. Numbers bring a sense of rationality to complex decisions—the ones we used to make with common sense, experience, and intelligence.

Yet more and more of the information we use to buy, elect, advise, acquit, and heal has been created not to expand our knowledge but to sell a product or advance a cause. If the results of the research contradict the sponsor's agenda, they will routinely be suppressed. Researchers have become secretive and their sponsors greedy. The media, which can usually get the raw numbers if they want them, are stingy with data because data are boring, and many journalists are themselves innumerate.

For example: If there were two things about food that we knew for sure, it was that milk was good for children and chocolate was bad. Studies found the opposite. Surely wine, cigarettes, and paté are harmful to your health. Studies have shown the reverse. For years, whole wheat bread was thought to be better than white. No, says a study. Studies found that oat bran was good for the heart, then not good, then good. Apple a day? A study showed apples cause cancer. Hundreds of studies have exonerated coffee; hundreds have damned it.

While most of the financing for food research comes from the government, private interests with financial stake in the outcome of the studies are paying a growing share. State and federal government financing for colleges and universities to do research and development has flattened in recent years, while the amount of financing from industry has increased dramatically. In 1981, industry contributed $292 million to schools for research; by 1991, that figure had jumped to more than $1.2 billion. The theory is that if the companies may profit from the research, and they often do, the companies should pay for it. Many food researchers must choose: research funded by an interested party or no research at all.

However complex and compromised, food research commands an astonishing loyalty from consumers, resulting in alarming shifts of behavior from study to study. A study showing that the paté-consuming French have healthier hearts actually increased sales of the fatty spread in the U.S. While most people would not rush out to take an experimental drug after one small study demonstrated its effectiveness, vast numbers of people will eat or not eat a food based on a single study. That is why studies have become such a big part of the food business.

Research about food has contributed many truths to the world, resulting in longer, healthier lives for those who follow its path. Woody Allen's futuristic fantasy notwithstanding, it is unquestionably true that more fruits and vegetables and less animal fat than Americans typically eat is good. Yet beyond some broad strokes of knowledge, there is little agreement about how coffee, oat bran, margarine, wine, and nuts, just to name a few, affect human bodies.

There is no truth about food so sacred that it cannot be challenged by research. In fact, the more the study defies common wisdom, the more likely it is to enjoy wide acclaim. Consider these surprises of recent years:

- "Milk is the number one health hazard facing young children," wrote a Santa Rosa, California, doctor in support of a new report by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. The report, released at a widely covered news conference in September 1992, cited a recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* about milk contributing to juvenile diabetes. Despite its vaguely neutral name, the committee is actually a pressure group of mostly vegetarians who oppose animal research and support animal welfare groups.
- White bread will not make you gain weight and, when used in a high-fiber diet, is an okay nutritional choice, reported the Cooper Institute for Aerobic Research. Its sponsor for the study: the makers of Wonder Bread. The research: inconclusive, to say the

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least. The 118 subjects were divided into four groups. One ate their normal diet; one group added four slices of low-calorie bread to their daily diet; one added eight slices of low-calorie bread; and a forth added eight slices of regular bread. This ended after a mere eight weeks. Predictably, no one in the study gained or lost significant weight, but the researchers said they *believed* the bread eaters would have lost weight if the study continued. The study was reported by the Associated Press.

➤ Chocolate may actually prevent cavities, reported a newsletter from the Princeton Resource Center, citing a study about how tannins in cocoa inhibit plaque formation. The group also published reports of a study about how sticky snacks like caramel actually dissolve faster than starchy foods like potato chips. This research "should dispel myths that foods perceived as 'sticky' or 'chewy' pose the greatest threat of dental decay," said the center, which is financed by M&M/Mars.

The nutrition study, like a political poll, is a machine with a thousand knobs. Turning any one of them a notch, even well within ethical limits, will dramatically change the outcome of the study. When studies differ, there are many legitimate-sounding—and possibly legitimate—reasons. But the flood of deliberately contradictory studies insures there will be no definitive proof of anything. If a study contradicts another study's position, buyers of research can simply commission more studies. They cannot be absolutely certain the new studies will confirm their position, but they know the researchers whose labs have produced agreeable results. "Usually associations that sponsor research have a fairly good idea what the outcome will be," said Joseph Hotchkiss of Cornell University. "Or they won't fund it."

Coffee Talk

There is probably no food on earth that has been as widely studied to so little effect as caffeine, the world's most popular drug. Several times a year, a new study about the effects of caffeine, usually studied in the form of coffee, is published to great media fanfare. The studies, which are often reported as though they are the first and last word on the subject, are in fact absurdly contradictory and would be funny if the media and consumers did not embrace them so fervently. "Coffee Study Finds Heavy Drinking Boosts Heart Risk," announced *The Wall Street Journal* in March 1990. Six months later, the *Journal* revisited the coffee question. "Coffee Study Finds No Link to Heart Illness," it reported, noting the earlier study and saying "controversy about coffee's effect on health probably will continue."

The hundreds, perhaps thousands, of studies on coffee have taught scientists a few things about it. For most people, coffee stimulates the nervous system, makes their muscles more resilient, and gives them a heady feeling of concentration and power. But there is much scientists do not know. Despite thousands of studies on coffee's effects on virtually every organ in the body, scientists still cannot completely rule out links to heart disease, cancer, infertility, breast cysts, and a dozen other maladies. Dueling studies suggest there may be associations—or there may not.

"You can never prove a negative," said George E. Boecklin, president of the National Coffee Association of U.S.A., the industry's trade group, which has certainly done its best, financing and publicizing studies that acquit coffee of all serious crimes.

In studying food, researchers have a choice between using animals and humans. As subjects, both are imperfect. Food research on mice or rats is flawed because animals have different physiologies and life expectancies: 30 months versus 70 years. One Food and Drug Administration study showed that when pregnant rats were fed the equivalent of 56 to 87 cups of strong coffee at one time, some of the offsprings' toes were deformed or missing. Human studies involving some 15,000 women, however, have found no association between caffeine and birth defects.

Human beings would be perfect subjects for research on human health. But unlike rats, people cannot be forced to do what they are supposed to do, and some of them lie about it. Ask a thousand men and women

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what they ate yesterday, and the answers will be inaccurate blends of what they should, could, and would have eaten. Even dietiticians who have been subjects of nutritional studies say they are tempted to lie about the steak, potato chips, or ice cream they ate in private.

To study long-term effects of a food, especially on diseases that can take decades to develop, like cancer, scientists need 20 years. But they find coffee addicts reluctant to give up their drug for 20 years for the sake of science. Studies on substances strongly suspected of being killers are even tougher to analyze. Scientists cannot assign half of their subjects to smoke a pack of cigarettes a day.

To further complicate the picture, every human being is different. Some people can smoke a pack a day and live to 100. Others have never picked up a cigarette but die of lung cancer at 30. Sulfite, a food additive used in wine, fruits, and vegetables, is perfectly benign to all but a few people; when those few are exposed to it, they die.

Too, coffee is not just caffeine. It is different types and ages of beans roasted at very high temperatures, releasing other chemicals. It is brewed in different ways—boiling, dripping, percolating. It can be caffeinated or not. Like people, no two pots of coffee are exactly alike. And where does moderate coffee drinking cross into heavy coffee drinking? Four cups a day? Eight? Twelve? For that matter, what is a cup? Five ounces? Six ounces? Eight ounces?

People who drink coffee also tend to have other health habits that may cause the problems blamed on coffee. The coffee drinker is also more likely to smoke, to eat pork and potato chips and to exercise less than someone who doesn't drink coffee. For whatever reason, coffee is associated with risk taking, at least where health is concerned. One study even found that heavy coffee drinkers tend to be less likely to wear seat belts. So how can scientists ever know whether the thing that is killing people is the coffee or the doughnuts?

With so many variables involved, it is no wonder there is an endless stream of coffee studies, each proving or ruling out ever

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smaller chunks of the mosaic: "Caffeine, moderate alcohol intake, and risk of fractures of the hip and forearm in middle-aged women" was the title of one 1991 study. As each new study arrives, newspapers and airwaves crackle with an excitement usually associated with major news events: "Caffeine Not Harmful to Health"; "Coffee's 'Perk-me-up' Effect Confirmed in Study"; "Coffee each Day Keeps Asthma Away in Italy." Such guileless enthusiasm for each coffee study is one reason scientists love to work on caffeine. So widely consumed is the addictive drug that if even a tiny association between it and disease was established, many lives could be saved and scientific careers made.

Paul Forsyth

The National Coffee Association is an active player in the caffeine study game. It commissions its own research, and it trumpets other research that supports the business goals of the association members. When a critical study is published, the association quickly reacts, issuing new releases complete with critical comments from "independent experts." "The coffee industry is incredibly powerful," said Dr. Robert Superko, who did some coffee research at Stanford University. "Once you get on their bad side, they have a very heavy hammer." Superko believes the industry shapes coffee research by choosing which studies to fund partly based on its hopes, rather than scrutinizing the study design with a cool, objective eye. And industry financing, said Superko, "indeed affects the way you publish the results. The coffee industry puts pressure on you to do it their way."

George Boecklin of the coffee association said that is not true. The only reason the association gets involved in financing research, he continued, is because otherwise it would look as though it had its "head in the sand." The research is done by respected institutions that are given "no strings attached" grants, Boecklin said. But the association's credibility is doubtful, at least insofar as the way they use research to further their self-interested goals.

During the cholesterol mania of the 1980s, for example, many researchers turned their attention to the subject of coffee and cholesterol. Some earlier studies had suggested a link between heart disease and coffee, but just what that link was remained a mystery. Could it be cholesterol?

After having put out brushfires over cancer, birth defects and heart disease, the coffee association was clearly worried about this new threat to the already depressed coffee business. The association invited several experts in the field of cholesterol and clinical trials to submit proposals for a study on the subject. Dr. Roy Fried's proposal won the financing.

Fried, then a research fellow at Johns Hopkins, received more than $200,000 from the coffee association to do his study. Fried designed a study of the effects of drinking filtered coffee (the brewing method most Americans now prefer) on cholesterol levels. Fried and his fellow researchers first asked 100 male subjects to give up coffee for eight weeks to wash out their systems. Then the men were randomly assigned to one of four groups: Drink four cups (24

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ounces) of regular coffee a day; drink four cups of decaffeinated coffee a day; drink two cups of regular coffee; and drink no coffee at all. The results: The cholesterol levels of the men who drank four cups a day of regular coffee rose. But the silver lining was that both their "good" and "bad" cholesterol levels seemed to have risen, canceling out any significantly increased risk of heart disease.

"We concluded that, based on the study, drinking modest amounts of filtered coffee does raise cholesterol, but that itself wouldn't increase the risk of heart disease," Fried said. His study was published on February 12, 1992, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association.*

Although the only *positive* result of the study was that coffee increased cholesterol, both the coffee association and the media found the *negative* results more interesting: "Study Refutes Link Between Coffee, High Cholesterol," said the *Minneapolis Star.* "Coffee is off the hook again," said the *Phoenix Gazette.* Meanwhile, the coffee association's fact sheet said: "Most studies involving U.S.-style filter-brewed coffee, including the 1992 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, have not found the association between . . . coffee and increased risk of cholesterol-related heart disease. Importantly, the *JAMA* study. . . controlled for diet, exercise and smoking, all known contributing factors for heart disease."

Fried's study was far from conclusive, however. The subjects were all men, and all but seven were white; the experiment lasted only four months (whereas many people drink coffee for most of a lifetime); the study was not double-blinded, which meant the subjects knew what they were drinking; and the maximum amount of coffee anyone drank was four cups a day, while many other studies tested more than four cups a day.

Food Fights

It is almost impossible for average consumers to sort through studies like these and know what they should be eating and drinking. Unfortunately, most Americans do not have ready access to the studies and would not know how to decipher them if they did. Even relatively lucid scientific studies contain lines like "The final analysis was based on a 'pre protocol' basis since the study objective was to test a dose-response relationship of B-glucan on serum lipids." Most members of the media are ill-equipped to judge a technical study. Even if the science hasn't been explained or published in a U.S. journal, the media may jump on a study if it promises entertainment for the readers or viewers. And if the media jump, that is good enough for many Americans.

So what is to be done? A good rule is to keep in mind that a study may hint at an emerging truth, and possibly offer a diverting bit of entertainment, but in general that is all it is—a hint and a diversion. Unless and until a study has been replicated, it should be looked on with care—the experiments proving the existence of cold fusion, still unreplicated, being a good example. To establish something as widely accepted as the belief that smoking causes lung cancer took decades, and the evidence came from many different threads of research—animal studies, human studies, epidemiological studies.

Beware of research and researchers calling themselves independent. Independent often just means there are many paying clients instead of one; it does not mean that there is no financial incentive to provide agreeable results. Similarly, the word "nonprofit" means little in assessing the credibility of a study; nonprofit researchers still count on a regular paycheck.

The tacit acceptance of untruth in daily life eats away at belief in right and wrong. If nothing is true, how can one solution be better than another? Progress stalls. "We should fuss, we should be indignant," wrote Ivan Preston about disinformation in advertising. "We should call the advertisers phonies, or bullshitters, or harassers, when we think that's what they are. . . . We should not allow our own silence to be one of the reasons why things stay the same." It is time to reclaim our numbers, our truth. □

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How Liberals Put Teachers in the Line of Fire

If we really want to give public schools a chance, we can't expect teachers to teach and *be cops and social workers all at once*

BY ADAM MARCUS

Item: In the Bronx's DeWitt Clinton High School, a student described as "emotionally disturbed" was caught in school with a four inch knife. The weapon was promptly confiscated, but because the student was in special education, he could not, according to the school system's rules, be suspended. Because the knife's blade was not longer than four inches—and therefore not considered a weapon under New York State law—he could not be arrested. The student was transferred only after the teachers' union threatened to publicize the episode.

Item: In 1992, a 13-year-old boy in Northeast Washington, D.C., was allowed back in school less than a month after being arrested for firing a gun on the playground. Convinced that the student was capable of further violence, the principal, teachers, and the Parent Teacher Association all protested his reinstatement and pushed to have him transferred. In a *Washington Post* article, a spokesperson for the D.C. school system, Cheryl Johnson, explained the decision to ignore the protests by stating that a 25-day suspension was the school system's policy for a first gun offense.

No one cognizant enough to have read a newspaper in the past few years needs to be convinced that violence in our public schools is an epidemic. A 1991 National Institute of Justice survey of selected students in 10 inner-city public schools across the country found that 22 percent of students reported owning a gun, one third of whom said they carried a gun to school "regularly or occasionally." According to *American Educator*, 36 percent of inner city junior high school teachers report that they have been threatened by a student. Eleven percent of suburban teachers and 7 percent of rural teachers say they have been threatened.

Conservatives hear these wearying numbers and talk about more metal detectors and larger security forces. Liberals hear the same news and think of savage inequalities and root causes. Both have a point. But as the items above hint, the wound of public school violence is, to an alarming degree, the kind which neither battalions of cops nor Great Society programs can fully heal.

Adam Marcus is a staff writer for Prince George's Journal. *Additional reporting was provided by Stryk Thomas.*

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A growing number of laws hamstring teachers and administrators from dealing forcefully and freely with violent and emotionally disturbed teens. For any teacher or principal looking to remove a troublemaker, there are batteries of forms to be filed and endless judicial hoops to jump through.

These bureaucratic hurdles merely codify a deeper, fundamental flaw in our thinking about public schools: namely, that they are supposed to not simply educate our youth, but reform the violent and heal the deranged. That's an order too tall for *any* institution, let alone the perennially under-funded, over-extended schools charged with shaping the hearts and minds of our children. It's become a cliché to say that there is no job more important than educating our kids. Yet we have hopelessly complicated that job by demanding that teachers take on the additional roles of police officer, physical therapist, counselor and baby sitter—a bit like asking your dentist to be able to fix your teeth while he gives you a heart transplant and shines your shoes.

Robert Soulé

There are some mental blocks that need busting here, mental blocks built on the firmest of ground—good intentions. In recent years, the courts, Congress and groups like the NAACP and the ACLU have moved to broaden and protect the rights of students. At the same time, it has become received wisdom that our public schools should be required to "mainstream"—that is, place in a regular school classroom—all comers. Now, protecting students' rights makes eminent sense, but it has become so difficult to remove the chronically unruly that the pace of learning in many classrooms has slowed to a glacial crawl or been stopped altogether. And as for taking all comers, well it's hard to argue with the *spirit* of that ethos. Many who care about education—including this magazine—have urged public schools to stop "tracking" students (segregating them into accelerated and slow classes) because often this practice *causes* differences in ability rather than merely reflecting them. The distinction to keep in mind is between students who want to learn and those who don't: Including slower students doesn't stop a teacher *from teaching*, whereas having violent or disturbed students around does. That's why a tracked student and one who tries to strangle a teacher shouldn't be confused—the former should be mainstreamed, the latter should be expelled and charged with assault. It's time to learn the difference.

Christine Carnes understands this lesson only too well. In May 1993, when Carnes was a teacher at San Francisco's McAteer High School, she was attacked by an emotionally disturbed student wielding a chair. "He was saying 'I'm going to kill you, I'm going to kill you' and I believe he would have," says Carnes, whose arm, back, and neck were damaged in the attack. She and three other teachers are now filing a grievance against the San Francisco Unified School District on the grounds that they were not sufficiently protected. "I'll never go back to teaching," says Carnes, a 25-year veteran of the public school system.

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The student-attacker had already demonstrated what could politely be described as "behavioral problems." He beat other students, one so brutally in December 1992 that he was arrested and received a five day suspension. He had no regard for teachers and no fear of being disciplined. Carnes remembers the student calling her "bitch" and "lesbian" to her face. "He used to say things like 'I'm going to get you' in front of the whole class." Carnes reported every incident to school administrators, and each time the boy was returned to her classroom and a note was added to his personal file which read, "Conference held with student; reprimanded and counseled; limitations set; please keep parents posted."

Debra Saunders, a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, has been watching the city's school district board closely and believes that the board's strategy to reduce in-school violence is pretty simple: ignore it. The idea is to make the school system seem safer by reporting fewer violent incidents. Indeed, the number of expulsions has fallen by 65 percent in the past three years, down from 143 in 1991 to 50 last fall. There were 63 knife-related expulsions in 1991 and just 10 last fall. As Saunders wrote, "Now city parents ought to worry not only about who will protect their children from students who pack weapons, but also about who will protect their children from school administrators."

The genesis of San Francisco's head-in-the-sand attitude can be traced to 1975, when the Supreme Court, in *Goss v. Lopez*, decided that public school pupils had to get a hearing for suspension terms longer than 10 days. The effect of this ruling was to turn every principal seeking disciplinary action into a prosecutor saddled with the time-consuming responsibility of amassing evidence and building a case. That same year, Congress' Education of the Handicapped Act set up additional obstacles by mandating that handicapped students cannot be suspended or expelled if their offense results from the nature of their handicap. This is a decent idea on its face, until you realize that Christine Carnes' student could argue that he attacked her because of his emotional handicap.

In the following decade, courts began to apply civil rights doctrine to school disciplinary cases. 2000 U.S. Code 42-1983 states that anyone acting "under the color of state law" can be sued for violating another person's civil rights. Public school officials, of course, act under color of state law and therefore fall under the law's scope. According to Charles Kolb, deputy general counsel at the Department of Education during the Reagan administration, this law was "a chilling factor which prevented principals and teachers from taking disciplinary action against unruly students."

More recently, in response to pressure from minority groups, the Department of Education has turned school discipline into a numbers game. In those schools where minority students receive a disproportionate percent of a school's suspensions, organizations such as the NAACP have cried foul. As a result, the Department of Education can require school boards to demonstrate, based on numbers alone, that they are not discriminating by race. Obviously, this could lead to a situation where a minority student who deserves to be suspended isn't disciplined because doing so could put the school over its "quota" of minority suspensions.

The Cincinnati public school district is getting acquainted with the absurdities of this kind of policy. As part of the settlement in a lawsuit brought by the NAACP in 1984, the school system is being monitored by the courts to ensure that suspensions are proportional to the number of black and white students. With school systems facing the prospect of this kind of court oversight, administrators act preemptively. That is exactly what seems to have happened at San Francisco's McAteer High. Jonathan Frank, a former teacher at the school, believes that the reduction of suspensions has come about because most of the students being suspended are minorities and school administrators have decided that minority suspensions are, in his words, a "political hot potato."

The ACLU, for its part, hasn't helped matters much either. The group has consistently argued—in amicus briefs and public awareness brochures—that metal detectors, random searches, and mandatory expulsion for weapons possession in school infringe on a student's consti-

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tutional rights. In 1993, for example, the Southern California chapter condemned the Los Angeles school district's policy of automatic suspension for bringing both real and toy guns to school as something just short of "academic capital punishment."

So the ACLU worries about unlawful searches and seizures, the NAACP frets about discrimination, the courts try to protect students' rights, and Congress pushes for more democratic schools. Everyone's heart is in the right place, no one's intentions are easily impugned. Yet the sum total effect is to create a public school classroom that is so hellbent on inclusion and so obsessed with students' rights that the point of school—learning—ends up getting short shrift. Meanwhile, the children of many of the well-intentioned folks whose good intentions brought disruptive and violent behavior to public schools—the children of lawyers, lawmakers, and judges—are safely ensconced in private schools where students who can't behave are wisely, swiftly ejected.

In Virginia's Fairfax County public schools, on the other hand, any recommendation for expulsion must travel four rungs up a bureaucratic ladder before action is taken. In Los Angeles, to suspend or expel a student a principal must submit a recommendation for action to the school system's Student Discipline Proceedings Unit. This office then holds a hearing to decide whether or not to recommend action against the student, and then, if the unit feels the recommendation has merit, passes on its findings to the Los Angeles City Board of Education. Board members make the final decision, but here's the catch—every case has its own statute of limitations. If the time limit expires before the board meets, the case is dismissed.

According to Linda Wilson of the Student Discipline Proceedings Unit, if the board cancels a meeting, as it sometimes does, review of some serious cases can be delayed until past their expiration dates. While the most egregious incidents (often those involving guns) get handled first, usually that simply means frightening cases get pushed aside so that the board can handle *really* frightening cases. Last December, for instance, the board had so many cases in the pipeline and delayed hearings so long that two cases of possession of a knife, one case of brandishing a knife, and one possession of a dangerous object were neglected.

Teacher's Pests

The damage from the prolonged, tortuous proceedings which leave dangerous students in classes isn't measured simply in battered teachers or overburdened administrators—it is also measured in under-educated students. When one bad guy gets away with disrupting a class, it's a green light to those on the behavioral margins who might otherwise be stopped in their tracks; inevitably, there are opportunists inclined to take advantage of the chaos. The kids who want to learn shut up for fear of getting pummeled. The upshot, as Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, puts it, is "You don't help the bad kid, and you've effectively destroyed the environment for the other kids."

Emotionally and behaviorally disturbed children can have the same effect on a classroom

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because they demand far more time and energy. Jonathan Frank found himself dealing with so many non-stop disruptions that he resorted to what teachers call "drill and kill." "I had to spend the whole period going over simple repetition just to keep them under control," says Frank. "I hated it, but it was the only way."

Indeed, there's less and less actual *teaching* in public schools these days—so much less that many teachers are willing to take a cut in pay to get work in a private school. It's tempting to see this as a pedagogical version of white flight, but for many in the profession the point is that in private schools *they get to teach*. "Had I stayed in public schools, I'd be burned out and in another career by now," says Linda Preuter, a 5th grade teacher at Georgetown Day School, who took a 30 percent pay cut when she left her public school job. "I couldn't continue. . . It was too stressful."

What public schools need is what private and parochial schools already have—the option of real discipline for first time offenders and expulsion for the incorrigible. When a principal and faculty member agree on an expulsion on the ground that the student involved disrupts classes and interferes with the ability of the teacher to teach and of the other students to learn, that should be the end of it. There should not be a right to appeal with the threat of limitless hearings and paperwork that the appeal process imposes on the teacher and the principal who initiate the expulsion.

This will doubtless seem too draconian to all the liberals who have taken their children out of the public schools because of fear of violence and inferior education. But if we don't get the violence out of the public schools, we will continue to get the inferior education. Let's give the public school teacher a fair chance to do the job right.

Does this leave us with the problem of what to do with the behaviorally disturbed? Of course it does. And does that mean we will have a very difficult problem, one that will often be heartbreaking, left to deal with? Of course it does. But we were wrong—dead wrong—to dump the violent on the public schools. And it is time to admit our error before we let it destroy one of democracy's greatest institutions. □

Speak no evil.

Mass Rape

The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Edited by Alexandra Stiglmayer; Translated by Marion Faber
Foreword by Roy Gutman; Afterword by Cynthia Enloe

Alexandra Stiglmayer, a German journalist of Croatian origin, interviewed survivors of the continuing war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to reveal, to a seemingly deaf world, the atrocities of systematic rape. This first English edition includes interviews with some twenty victims of rape as well as interviews with three Serbian perpetrators. New to this English edition are essays by Catharine A. MacKinnon, Rhonda Copelon, and Susan Brownmiller; a foreword by Roy Gutman; and an afterword by Cynthia Enloe. $14.95 pa, $35.00 cl

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Samuel Walker

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Tidbits & Outrages

NOT COUNTING ALDRICH AMES

The New York Times reported that the money lost in the explosion last summer of a rocket carrying a spy satellite was equal to a year's salary for every spy and analyst at the CIA.

"PLEASE STATE YOUR AGE AT THE TIME YOU BEGAN FILLING OUT THIS FORM"

A group organized by Jimmy Carter to streamline government paperwork revealed that the South Carolina Medicaid application is 41 pages long.

GREAT MOMENTS IN FACT-CHECKING

The Los Angeles Times ran the following correction: "JoAnn Stroughter has never run a crack ring as stated in a picture caption in Tuesday's View section."

"YOU KNOW, THE SAME REASONS WE CALL A PAYMENT FOR PLAYING FOOTBALL A 'SCHOLARSHIP' AND A YEAR OFF WITH FULL PAY A 'SABBATICAL'"

After presiding over a substantial increase in University of California "student fees," not for the auxiliary services and activities such fees were intended to cover, but for instructional costs, UC president Jack Peltason was asked by a university regent, "Why don't we call it tuition?" Peltason replied, "For legal, expeditious reasons we don't use that term."

"Feud" host Ray Combs: In the middle of an ancient debate

GOOD ANSWER, MOSHE, GOOD ANSWER!

In a bid for better ratings during May sweeps week, the game show "Family Feud" pitted a team of priests against a team of rabbis. In the ten-night face-off, with proceeds going to charity, the priests won more times, but the rabbis earned more money.

—Scott Shuger

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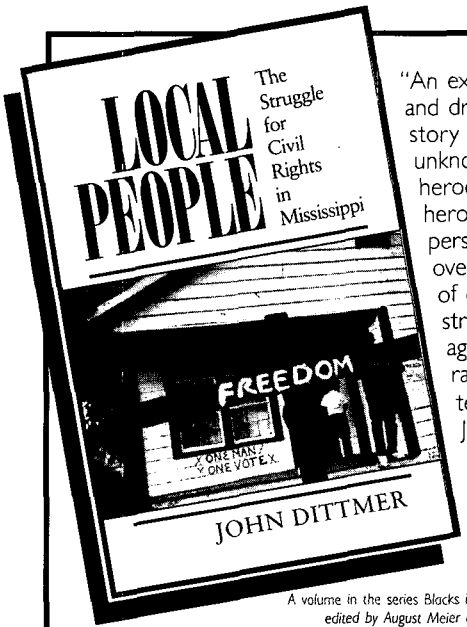

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"Did he really say that?" was the question other reporters were asking one another in reaction to **R.W. Apple**'s use of the term "straight arrow" to describe **Richard M. Nixon** in a front-page article in *The New York Times*. . . .

Lloyd Cutler is given most of the credit for selling the **Clintons** on the new spirit of openness at the White House that was behind the First Lady's Whitewater press conference. In case you didn't know, Cutler's "special government employee" status means that he can only serve 130 working days but that he can continue to draw a salary from his law firm and is not subject to all the conflict-of-interest rules that apply to regular employees. . . .

Hillary Clinton is said to have rehearsed that April 22 press conference with lawyers from **David Kendall**'s firm, Williams & Connolly, media consultant **Mandy Grunwald**, and pollster **Stan Greenberg**. Among those taken by surprise by the First Lady's session with reporters were **George Stephanopoulos**, **Mark Gearan**, **Dee Dee Myers**, and **David Gergen**, the White House officials who are supposed to be in charge of dealing with the media. . . .

Speaking of public officials' wives whose prosperity seems to be enhanced by their spouses' electoral success, **Andrea Jefferson**, the wife of Congressman **William Jefferson** of New Orleans, is being paid, according to the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, $50,000 to teach one student in one course at the New Orleans campus of Grambling University, a publicly supported institution. . . .

Those who were curious about why **Bill Clinton** seemed to identify with **Richard Nixon** in his recent remarks about the late president might consider this passage from the **Gennifer Flowers**' tape: After Flowers mentions her state job, the future leader of the free world replies, "If they ever ask if you talked to me about it, you can say no." Richard Nixon could well have spoken the very same words to **John Dean** or **Bob Haldeman**. . . .

Michael Shaheen, the director of the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility, is suspected of having been a principal source of Whitewater leaks from Justice to *The Washington Post*, according to **Joel Bleifuss** of *In These Times*. Bleifuss suggests this is the second time Shaheen has doled out information damaging to a president: He may have seriously injured **Jimmy Carter** with leaks of exaggerated details about Billygate in 1980. . . .

While Mayor **Sharon Pratt Kelly**'s experience in the realms of substance abuse and sexual adventure does not compare with **Marion Barry**'s, veteran observers of the

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Who's Who

capital's municipal government say she is his equal in at least one respect: administrative incompetence. The latest scandal is that for three years officials of Kelly's administration have been giving housing vouchers not to the homeless who are supposed to have priority, but for bribes that ranged as high as $1,000. "The fact that public and assisted housing could only be obtained through bribery was a well-known fact within certain segments of the community," according to the United States Attorney's office. "Law enforcement authorities said," reports *The Washington Post*, "that knowledge of the scheme was so widespread, particularly among public housing dwellers, that the practice was accepted as a standard way of doing business at the troubled agency." . . .

In a White House where chaos is the rule, **Christine Varney**, the cabinet secretary, and **John Podesta**, the staff secretary, stand out as lonely martyrs to the cause of trying to get things organized. . . .

And **Rahm Emmanuel,** whom Bill Clinton especially recognized for his role in the passage of the ban on assault weapons, is said to be one of the few aides, on a White House staff composed of the risk-averse, who is not afraid to take the ball and run with it. Emmanuel now has two big victories to his credit, the other being NAFTA. When the overall crime bill passes, he will have hit a trifecta. . . .

Others who get high marks on crime legislation: White House staffers **Bruce Reed, Jonathan Prince, Elizabeth Bernstein**, and Treasury Secretary **Lloyd Bentsen** for his efforts to persuade rank-and-file hunters not to listen to their NRA masters in Washington. . . .

The editors of this magazine are always complaining that today's liberalism lacks a **Will Rogers**. Who's Who has two candidates: **Charles Kuralt** and **Garrison Keillor**. If you didn't see the recent special on Kuralt, send CBS $19.95 for a tape of the show on which Kuralt says, "I think liberalism lives—the notion that we don't have to stay where we are as a society, that we have promises to keep, is liberalism. . . . What on earth did conservatism ever accomplish for our country?" As for Keillor, he recently said this about his generation and Whitewater:

"My generation strikes me as self-absorbed. You hear them at the grocery store deliberating the balsamic vinegar and olive oils, the cold pressed virgin olive oil vs. the warm pressed olive oil, and you think, 'These people probably subscribe to an olive oil magazine, called *New Dimension*, people with too much money and very little character, people who are all sensibility and no sense, all nostalgia and no history, the people my aunt Eleanor used to call 'a $10 haircut on a 59-cent head.'

"Whitewater is their kind of scandal. It's carbonated, and it's less about what's real than it is about perceptions. It's all surface. But people of my generation are into surface. That's why they are so easily disillusioned by politics. It doesn't look pretty. How convenient for them—to grow up in a country that offers such opportunities and blessings as would only be a fantasy in most of the world, and then check out in disillusionment.". . .

Roman Genn

Jim Sasser and **Tom Daschle** are reported to be neck-and-neck in the race to replace **George Mitchell** as Senate Majority Leader. Daschle is Who's Who's favorite, but Sasser is said to have the advantage of having in **David Pryor** the same closest friend in the Senate as **Bill Clinton**. And Sasser may also have the support of **Al Gore**, his former colleague and another member of **John Seigenthaler**'s *Tennessean* Democratic circle in Nashville. . . .

Insiders have two observations about **Christopher Ogden**'s new biography of **Pamela Churchill Harriman**, which **Sandra McElwaine** reviews in this issue [see page 54]. The sympathetic one is that it's a shame the book, which dishes plenty of dirt, is coming out now, when Harriman deserves kind words for doing a good job as ambassador and for working hard. The catty view is, however, that for all its delicious revelations, the book is oddly deadpan. The author's humorlessness, we're told, reflects Harriman's own earnest demeanor (she is said to be as sparkling a conversationalist as **Warren Christopher**), which is certainly strange in a woman who seems to have employed the arts of the courtesan with greater success than anyone else in this century. . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*

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The D-Day Generation

A baby boomer pays tribute to the men and women who won World War II and built the peace

BY PEGGY NOONAN

I keep wondering about who we are these days, all of us. I keep wondering if we're way ahead of our parents—more learned, more tolerant, and engaged in the world—or way behind them. They touch my soul, that generation. They are an impenetrable inspiration. They got through the Depression and the war—they got drafted for five years and said Okay, Uncle Sam! and left, and wrote home. They expected so little, their assumptions were so modest. A lot of them, anyway. The women shared the common trauma of a childhood in hard times and the men had the common integrator of the barracks, and I feel that they understood each other. They knew what they shared. When Communism fell we should have had a parade for them, for it meant their war was finally over. We should have one for them anyway, before they leave.

They weren't farmers, or the ones I knew weren't farmers, but they were somehow—closer to the soil, closer to the ground. The ones in Brooklyn, Rochester, wherever, they were closer to the ground.

Affluence detaches. It removes you from the old and eternal, it gets you out of the rain. Affluence and technology detach absolutely. Among other things, they get you playing with thin plastic things like Super Nintendo and not solid things like—I don't know—wood, and water. Anyway, the guy who said "Plastics" to Benjamin 25 years ago in *The Graduate* was speaking more truth than we knew.

Also, our parents were ethnic in a way I understood. Back in that old world the Irish knew they were better than the Italians and the Italians knew they were better than the Irish and we all knew we were better than the Jews and they knew they were better than us. Everyone knew they were superior, so everyone got along. I think the prevailing feeling was, everyone's human. Actually, that used to be a saying in America: *Everyone's human.*

They all knew they were Americans and they all knew they weren't, and their kids knew it too, and understood it was their job to become the

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Peggy Noonan is a former speechwriter for President Reagan. Adapted from the book Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, *© 1994 by Peggy Noonan. Reprinted by permission of Random House.*

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Americans. Which we certainly have. A while ago a reporter told me how an old Boston pol summed up Mario Cuomo. The pol said, "He's not a real ethnic. He's never been ashamed of his father." The reporter—45, New York, Jewish—laughed with a delighted grunt. The ordeal of ethnicity. *I Remember Papa.*

There were ethnic, religious, and racial resentments, but you didn't hear about them all the time. It was a more reticent country. Imagine chatty America being reticent. But it was.

I often want to say to them, to my parents and the parents of my friends, Share your wisdom, tell me what you've learned, tell me what we're doing wrong and right. But, you know, they're still reticent. Loose lips sink ships. Also, they tend not to have big abstract things to say about life because they were actually busy living it, and forgot to take notes. They didn't have time, or take time, to reflect. They were not so inclined.

They're like an old guy I met a few years ago when I was looking for a house in Washington. He had gray hair and was stooped in a crouched, still-muscular way and had just one good eye, the other was scarred and blind. He had an old brick house off George Washington Parkway and I had walked through it; it was perfect but too near the highway for a woman with a two-year-old. When I was in the basement I saw his World War II memorabilia—he still had framed citations on the wall, and I could see he'd seen action island-hopping in the South Pacific. And one of the old framed papers said Guadalcanal, and this was exciting, so I said to him, for the most interesting things you hear in life come by accident, "Did you know Richard Tregaskis?" And his good eye squinted. I thought he might not recognize the reference, so I said to him, "He was the one who wrote *Guadalcanal Diary*." And the squint gets deeper and he says, "Yeah, well, I was a grunt. We'd already done the work and left by the time the writers came." I sort of smiled and asked if I could use the bathroom, where I plucked a piece of shrapnel from my heart.

Now they're all retired, and most of the ones I know are in pretty good shape. My friend Susan's parents go to Atlantic City and catch a few shows, play the slots. They own their house. My father—army infantry, Italy under Blood 'n' Guts—has a small apartment in Santo Domingo and swims and says he can feel the sun to his bones. My mother lives here in town and flies off when one of her children is having a baby, to be a continuity, to say by her presence, We did this too, years ago, so don't worry. Lisa's parents just got back from Europe. George's father, who for 25 years worked in a Newark welfare office, married a woman with a farm in Pennsylvania. Now he walks in the mud in big rubber boots, holding a piece of corn. He's happy. There was more divorce than I think we've noted in our parents' generation, and a lot of them did it in a funny way, not after a year or 10 years but after 25, 35 years. After a life. There are always serious and individual reasons for such things, but I would include the seventies, the decade when America went crazy, the decade when, as John Updike said, the sixties had finally percolated down to everybody. □

The National Archives

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The Bottom Line on Health Reform

This is it. In Washington the compromises are coming fast and furious. Here's where reformers must stand firm—and where we ought to deal

BY JON MEACHAM AND TED MARMOR

All the elements are in place for a classic Washington minuet on health care: Mitchell and Foley shuttling between the White House and Capitol Hill; Moynihan expounding on the Sunday morning shows; Clinton cajoling lawmakers; then, in the end, C-Span televising the vote on the Health Security Act of 1994. The president will hail the achievement in the Rose Garden, and the congressional satraps will then run home to campaign.

First, the setting: The Democrats want to pass a health care bill this year—*any* bill. After George Mitchell led a Colonial Williamsburg retreat of Senate Democrats in late spring, he came back saying, "There was no discussion of timing, except we intend to get it done this year." On the plane back to Washington from Nixon's funeral in California, Bob Dole organized an all-night health care talkathon.

But the terrifying likelihood is that what emerges will fall far short of the reform the country needs. This is especially true if the legislative winner is a limited bill that merely takes care of the two things the middle class thinks will solve its insurance worries: eliminating denial of coverage if you have a preexisting condition and guaranteeing you won't lose insurance if you switch jobs. It this happens, then the constituency for major health reform could become like that for deficit reduction or for aid to the poor—the pious and the concerned, and history tells us they don't often make up a working majority.

Instead, we will go on spending nearly $1 trillion annually, billions more than any other industrialized democracy, on a health care system that, unlike any other democracy, leaves millions uninsured and still millions more worried that they cannot pay medical bills, insured or not—in sum, a confused and angry public spending too much money and not getting what it wants in return.

But insurance reform, while important and no doubt politically appealing, won't be enough. In Washington the temptation is growing to do whatever it takes to get a bill, even one that could prove inadequate. "There is a sense that this is closing in—all the years of meetings and all the studies and all the speeches," says Jay Rockefeller.

On May 4, for example, Democrats Bob Kerrey

Jon Meacham is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Ted Marmor is a professor in the Yale School of Management and is the author of the forthcoming* Understanding Health Care *(Yale University Press).*

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and David Boren endorsed Republican John Chafee's bill, which has no reliable mechanism for controlling overall costs, creates new bureaucracies, and delays universal coverage until the 21st century. Nevertheless, the step was hailed by Washington voices with a stake in keeping reform to a minimum.

"This is the most significant breakthrough all year in moving Congress toward action," said Bill Gradison, head of the Health Insurance Association of America. Well, yes, if you consider firmly entrenching private insurers at the heart of an already-complicated health care system and delaying universal coverage for a decade "action." But the tom-toms are beating: A *Washington Post* headline declared: "Chafee Bill: A Dose of Compromise." A Democratic campaign strategist told *The Washington Times*, "Democrats cannot afford to let this go on until the bitter end. We have to have health care in hand to take home to the voters." Apparently so: On May 10, Ted Kennedy, long a backer of major health reform, proposed eliminating the critical Clinton health purchasing alliances in order to get a bill out of his Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. And the president summoned the Democratic leadership to a May 24 White House meeting to see what has to be done to make a deal this year.

But history is unmistakable on this point: Legislative rush jobs near an election often produce near-fatal to fatal compromises. (Exceptions are the historic Congresses of Roosevelt in 1933-36 and of Johnson in 1964-66.) Frequently what appear to be reasonable concessions—in this case, just reforming insurance, for example—are in truth fatal flaws. The 1986 Tax Reform Act, for instance, despite its announced aims, neither radically simplified the nation's tax system nor made it fairer by dramatically increasing the amount of income subject to federal tax. Likewise, the promised total welfare reform of the Family Support Act of 1988—Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned then that "we put the next century at risk" if the bill didn't pass—failed to match its ambitions and here the nation is again debating how to end welfare "as we know it."

To be sure, we wish the Clintons had used a Canadian-style single payer system as a working model for health reform. Contrary to the popular impression that single payer is some kind of horrifically statist enterprise, it is in fact the most attractive and least disruptive of the reform plans that are on Washington's table. How? Because single payer largely eliminates the key villain that makes most people unhappy with or nervous about their health coverage: costly insurers. It also covers everyone at equal levels of decent care, controls costs, guarantees doctor choice, and is mainly financed by income and sales taxes, not a potentially burdensome employer mandate or a hopelessly complicated individual one.

But the Clintons—and enough congressional Democrats—instead embraced the untested and more complex theory of managed competition. (Congressman Sam Gibbons summed up Washington's attitude toward single payer: "It just won't fly.") Managed competition enhances the role of multiple private insurers, allows the affluent to buy better care, cannot reliably control costs, limits doctor choice unless you can pay more, and depends—for both financing and administration—on an employer or individual mandate.

What reformers must do, then, is make one last push for a single payer, single plan for the nation.

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This is hardly a lost cause: The Paul Wellstone-Jim McDermott bill has 92 co-sponsors in the House and five in the Senate, more than Jim Cooper's alternative, and California has put single payer on its November ballot. (But even Wellstone-McDermott relies on employer financing, which could cost jobs.) If single payer fails, we should intelligently draw lines in the sand to fight for what's essential. This means provisions that you can't be denied coverage; that you won't lose your insurance if you change jobs (called "portability"); that small businesses be able to ally with other businesses in order to gain bargaining power with insurers; and every American ought to have the right to buy the same plan that covers federal employees and members of Congress.

These are clearly doable reforms. More important but infinitely more contentious are universal coverage in the near future; cost control; comprehensive, equal benefits for every American; standardized paperwork and rules to determine what's covered; sensible financing; patient choice of doctor; and doctor liberty within budget limits. And we *can* make sure states have the means to set up their own single payer plans, a provision that's in the Clinton bill. Cooper, however, actively opposes the option, meaning the provision could fall through the cracks if advocates of sensible, large-scale change don't pay attention.

Up to now the trappings of the debate—the ever-extended buildup of Hillary Clinton's semi-secret task force, presidential speeches and town meetings, Harry and Louise ads and counter-ads—have been just that: trappings. This is the time reformers must decide when to stand firm and when to make realistic compromises. Although the Clinton legislation is complicated—perhaps the most complicated legislation in a generation—the criteria to judge the final product are not so incomprehensible.

• ***Universal, equal coverage by 1998.***

Universal coverage is the one thing Clinton insisted on in his 1994 State of the Union speech. But there is still enormous wiggle room on the deadline the bill sets for full coverage. Clinton wants it by 1998; Chafee, the most moderate GOP alternative, waits until 2005; Cooper doesn't have it at all. The instinct on the Hill is to split the difference between 2005 and 1998 and go with, say, 2003. But a deadline after 1998 is unacceptable.

Why? First, the pocketbook argument. While it may appear that universality is just another damn giveaway program, it is actually the linchpin of sensible health insurance. Universality gets rid of the free riders who take advantage of the current system of cost-shifting. This currently lets hospitals and doctors charge people who can pay—well-insured patients and the government, through Medicare and Medicaid—for services it provides free to people who can't.

Universal coverage under equal terms and conditions—the Canadian model—puts everyone in the same pool and prevents hospitals and doctors from playing different payers against each other, thereby controlling medical inflation. In a universal system like the one Clinton proposes, the insured would not have to worry that he's getting ripped off by the uninsured guy who shows up in an emergency room after a careless motorcycle accident. If you have insurance now, you are already paying—to the tune of scores of billions of dollars in total premiums—for people who don't.

Republicans and Democrats like Cooper, however, would at most like to guarantee the right of every American simply to buy coverage—which is no reform at all, because all Americans, if they have enough money, can do that now. As Senator Tom Daschle, a Clinton supporter, rightly says, "That's like saying everyone has access to a Mercedes. Sure, you can walk into a showroom and test drive one, but not everyone can afford to *buy* one."

Second, the moral case. The affluent should not have the right—as they will under Clinton—to buy more doctor choice. Congress and the federal bureaucracy have reserved themselves the right to buy out of the basic plan, which would cover 80 percent of the population. A two-tiered system, one for the well off, the other for those who can't afford to buy more, is not the way health care should be run—it's like saying the police or fire departments shouldn't answer calls in poor neighborhoods. And if we are all in the same boat, we will care about the cost for all of us instead of just our own plans.

Delay could also keep future Congresses and administrations from finishing the job. It is the nature of our politics, after all, to lurch from crisis to crisis. Massachusetts, for example, has taken the marvelous step of *legislating* universal coverage but has never gotten around to *funding* it. It's unlikely that a federal plan would pass without at least a "target date" for universality; the phrase to

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watch for is "date certain." Without that, Clinton should make good on his threat and veto whatever comes out of Congress.

• ***Cost control.***

The U.S. spends more than 14 percent of GDP, over $900 billion, on health care. If current trends hold, the figure will hit 16 percent by the end of 1994 and 18 percent by 1998. Per capita, we spend a third more than Canada, the next highest-spending country in the world.

How to control costs? The Clintons already compromised on serious cost control by not mandating global budgets (set amounts a state or set of providers can spend, a feature of most other successful health systems and of single payer). Instead, they fall back on limiting the growth of premiums and pray that competition between different health plans will produce savings, or at least slow the rate of medical inflation.

This is weak tea for people who had hoped for reliable cost control, but it is what most in Congress are at best prepared to put in their cups. Move right from Clinton—in other words, look at any plan except for single payer—and there are neither premium limits nor global budgets. There's no attempt to control costs except through the unreliable promise that competition, which has not worked yet, will do so now.

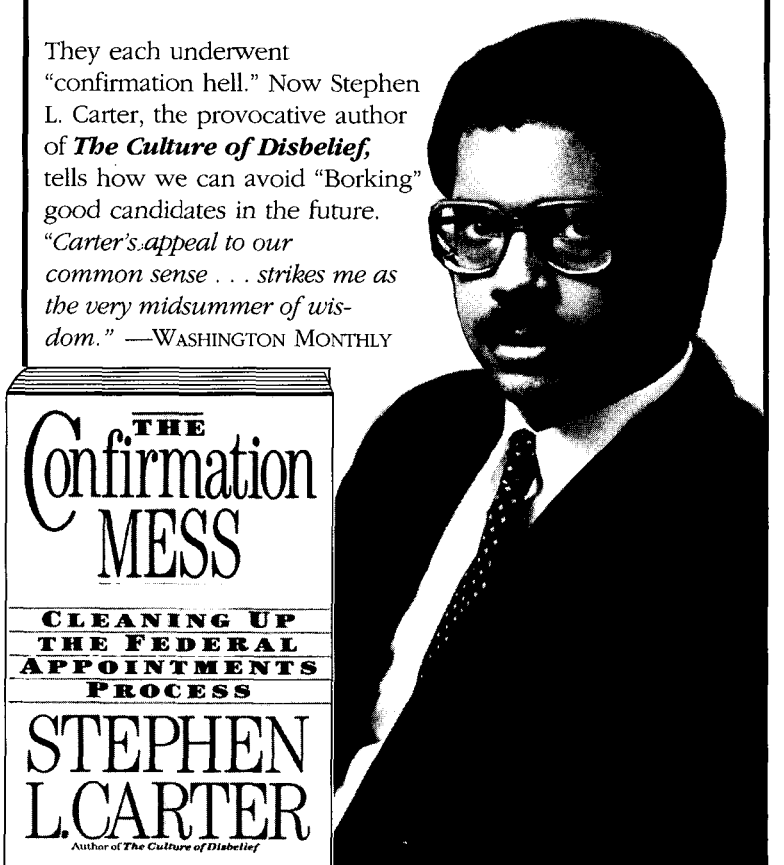
We know that the market does not work in medicine in the way it does, for example, for washing machines. That's because when people are sick and walk into a doctor's office or an emergency room, they aren't thinking about price or comparative shopping; they want to get well, and the human instinct is to pay whatever is asked to do that. Also, visiting a doctor is not like shopping at Sam's or Price Club, where you know precisely what you want and how much you're willing to pay for it. With medical care, patients depend on physicians to tell them what they need, and if doctors tend to sell a lot of services, more money gets spent. When you're in the examining room, worried, you aren't thinking like an ordinary shopper. Hence a willingness to pay whatever is asked, and hence soaring medical costs.

So while overall budget limits are what would really work, a realistic compromise is to fight for the Clintons' premium caps. Why lose blood over an already-compromised measure? Because the alternative—the chimera of competition—is worse.

What else can control costs nationally? Reform of specialization, doctor training, and malpractice

What do Robert Bork, Zoe Baird, and Lani Guinier have in common?

They each underwent "confirmation hell." Now Stephen L. Carter, the provocative author of ***The Culture of Disbelief,*** tells how we can avoid "Borking" good candidates in the future. *"Carter's appeal to our common sense . . . strikes me as the very midsummer of wisdom."* —WASHINGTON MONTHLY



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can play an important role over time. One of the most readily identifiable causes of higher medical spending is the overspecialization of physicians. A look at their salaries tells part of the story: In 1991, according to the American Medical Association, anesthesiologists and surgeons made $221,000 and $233,800 respectively; pediatricians and family-practice physicians took in $119,300 and $111,500. More important is how inclined specialists are to order expensive, high-tech tests. A 1992 New England Medical Center Health Institute study found that specialists order more tests, perform more procedures, and hospitalize patients much more often than general practitioners or family doctors.

At the moment, in all other developed countries, 50 to 75 percent of doctors are GPs; in the U.S., only 29 percent are, and even that number is eroding rapidly. Only 14 percent of current medical students are choosing primary care, which is less than half the rate (36 percent) in 1982.

Health care costs will never be slowed if we don't reverse this trend. Another 1990 study says that a 50-50 mix of primary care doctors to specialists would generate a 39 percent cut in total money spent on doctor services. If true, getting to that even mix should be one of the highest priorities of health reform.

Consider: No other part of the health care world gets *increased* funding in the Clinton bill *except* medical educators. In exchange for an increase in grants—from $5 billion now to $10 billion by the year 2000—Clinton would require medical schools to train specialists and primary care doctors in a 50-50 ratio by 1998 instead of the current 70-30 mix. But by lobbying lawmakers from major urban areas (where teaching hospitals are especially important), groups like the Greater New York Hospital Association have successfully made their case to legislators who have tacitly agreed to back the schools' increased funding but not the ratio.

Moreover, the weakness of the current reform strategy is that it attacks the problem only from the medical school perspective (and, as you can see, it's getting outmaneuvered there). A more immediate, inexpensive reform would be to have the government make the annual student loan payment for interns and residents who become GPs *and* even for specialists who are already practicing but who decide to switch to general medicine. Unlike other reforms, this one won't cost an enormous amount because Washington doesn't have to take on the total loan, only the yearly payments for as long as the doctor stays in general practice. And if doctors later bugged out and specialized, the payments would stop and we could force them to pay back everything the government had ponied up on their behalf.

This is a curious political fight, because the enemies of change aren't run-of-the-mill flacks for, say, cigarette companies or the gun lobby. They are the cream of research medicine, the deans of famous medical schools, who are fighting to preserve their departmental structures and their federal funding. Because medical school departments are now built around specialties, the chairmen of those departments, and their deans, have an understandable obsession with preserving their specialties' contributions to medicine. But we can't let them get away with acting out that obsession by attracting so many available physicians into specialties at everyone else's ultimate expense.

There are two other forces which seem to contribute to physicians' justifiable self-pity: Harsh internships and residencies and the high cost of malpractice insurance. Hospitals and medical schools must stop exhausting young doctors who, in the heat of 36-hour shifts, forge a lasting sense of entitlement that expresses itself in choosing high-priced specialties or, in some cases, in resisting reform that would affect their incomes. What we have to correct is the insanity of the medical culture's abuse of its young. (In fact, this magazine once proposed giving every medical intern a Jaguar so that, when they came out dazed and exhausted from long shifts and saw the *older* physicians' fancy cars parked in the lot, young doctors would have less reason to store up grievances.) In order to help make medical education more bearable, older doctors could be required to do occasional night duty as part of their privileges to admit patients to hospitals.

The other problem generating self-pity is malpractice worries. At the moment, fearing ruinous lawsuits, doctors are practicing defensive medicine, ordering up every test imaginable to cover themselves. Childbirth is a good example. Caesarian sections are twice as expensive as regular births—$10,000 as opposed to $5,000—but are now considered the safest way to prevent a lawsuit if something goes wrong. In 1993 the Centers for Disease Control found that doctors

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had performed 349,000 unnecessary C-sections, at a cost of an extra $1 billion. Why? "When the malpractice issue became a huge one," Dr. Kaighn Smith of Philadelphia's Lankenau Hospital told the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "we began to do things in the hope of preventing a malpractice action against us. Those things became habit." But the point is many C-sections are unnecessary, and if doctors had less reason to fear malpractice suits, the rate of the procedures would drop, saving money and sparing new mothers the trauma of being cut open when there's no medical need for it.

Yet right now there is no cap on the damages a jury is entitled to assess in malpractice suits and no limit on lawyers' fees. This is one case where Chafee's Republican bill goes further than Clinton, and reformers ought to back Chafee. He would limit pain-and-suffering damages to $250,000, cap lawyers' fees at 25 percent, and make losers pay lawyer and court fees. This would still pay for a malpractice victim's medical trauma and whatever money he loses because he can't work. But it would finally bring the infinitely inflatable pain-and-suffering damages under control. Potentially fatal obstacles: There are 66 lawyers in the Senate, and the House is reluctant, too. When a Ways and Means subcommittee passed a $350,000 limit on non-economic damages—in other words, pain-and-suffering—Congressman Jack Brooks of Texas, head of the Judiciary Committee, wrote Dan Rostenkowski a letter warning Ways and Means off his committee's turf. Rosty told his colleague not to worry. "That won't get out of the full committee," Rostenkowski reportedly said.

But encouraging doctors to generalize, freeing them from insurance company oversight, and curbing malpractice lawsuit excesses should go some way toward reminding physicians why many of them went into medicine in the first place. The image of the decent, hardworking doctor is a powerful figure in American life and is what attracts many young people to the profession.

The fact is, physicians are themselves increasingly terrified of having their lives turned upside down by making private insurers even more important than they are now—which will result from anything less than a single payer plan.

Recently, a hematologist at Yale simply blurted out that the current world of managed care is "ruining the practice of medicine." A psychiatrist, his eyes glistening, reports how unbelievable are the demands of distant reviewers who tell him what

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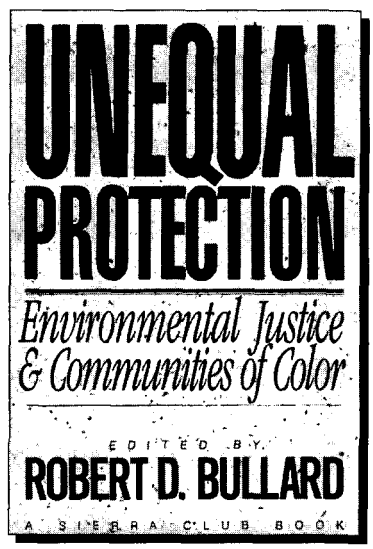

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his suicidal patients do and don't need. Another shrink reports a case where a Minnesota case manager was unwilling to agree to pay for extra hospital days for a 23-year-old woman who was suicidal, had lost her therapist, and was diagnosed with Huntington's chorea (a deadly neurological affliction that kills all its victims, like Lou Gehrig's disease). The hospital staff was horrified, the woman was distraught, and medical care was being handled as if a collection agency was in charge.

Indeed, if most physicians understood the trajectory of managed care, as some do, they would be clamoring for reform, like single payer, that rearranges the way care is *paid* for and leaves them the freedom (as doctors have in single payer systems) to practice as they wish, protected from the medical judgment of quasi-accountants. That's why the 60,000-member American College of Surgeons, for example, has endorsed a Canadian system, even though its members have the most personal income at stake if the growth of fees is capped.

• ***Financing.***

Much has been made of the small business lobbies' campaign against mandating that employers pay for some percentage of their workers' insurance. But even Senator John Breaux, Cooper's key co-sponsor, suggested in mid-May that mandates are very much on the table. The essential point, however, is not whether mandates are good or bad politics but why they are bad policy. Employer mandates attempt, as Yale Professors Jerry Mashaw and Michael Graetz noted recently in *Domestic Affairs*, to arrest the rapid unravelling of employment-based health insurance that now leaves as many as 60 million Americans without coverage at some point every year. In fact, it is the decline in the percentage of the employed who are insured through their workplace—not unemployment or a decline in support for public programs—that has resulted in a smaller percentage of Americans being covered now than in 1980. But mandating the repair of this crumbling edifice does not equal sensible policy choice.

First, employer mandates are perverse forms of taxation, with undesirable economic effects. Small employers, collectively the largest source of job creation, can least afford hefty benefits. And efforts to subsidize small employers—as the Democrats are trying to do—are endlessly complex (as, of course, are subsidies to individuals). For example: If generous, subsidies could induce large firms to subdivide into smaller corporate units in order to attract subsidy dollars. Bar association meetings already contemplate the extra legal business that such subsidies would prompt—one New York bar session called any health bill that included an employer mandate "a full employment act for lawyers."

Any mandate makes independent contractors or temporary workers more attractive than regular employees, and the IRS already finds monitoring independent contractors enormously difficult. New mandates would come at the worst possible economic time: Though the recovery from the 1990-91 recession is fairly strong, there are still 10 million unemployed and 6.2 million people who have taken part-time work but want a full-time job. Tying benefits to employment also extends the problems of administering portability—the ability to change jobs without losing or impairing insurance coverage—and this can be solved only by further mandates and regulation. Finally, employer mandates do nothing for the unemployed, who would have to be covered separately.

In sum, the appeal of employer mandates is truly illusory. They are an indirect form of taxation, one that masks the tax and perversely redistributes income. They are justified as "building on the present system." But the present system is like sand—porous and unstable. Arguments about whether employers should pay 50 or 80 percent of mandated premiums are misleading. Except for minimum wage workers, employers may write the checks, but workers pay the costs. Proportional taxes on individual wages, more appealing in principle, have the unavoidable defect of making permanent employees more expensive than other business costs.

The new kid on the mandate block is Chafee's *individual* mandates, which would require every person to buy insurance and, if the person were too poor, would subsidize him to make it affordable. This would require the same bureaucracy that the Clinton employer mandates depend on, but more important, universal coverage is delayed for 11 years and costs would still be as uncontrollable as they are now.

Canadian-style single payer, however, has the virtue of funding national health insurance mainly with income and sales taxes, a fact that reduces the direct burden on employment. For reformers, the realistic compromise is to walk with Rostenkowski,

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who understands that a broader tax is necessary. Two ideas present themselves which might together raise enough money to pay for a reformed system (but remember that this is a *substitute* for what the country now pays in insurance premiums, not an additional financial burden): A well-implemented national value-added tax on consumption—championed in theory by people as diverse as Sam Nunn and Jerry Brown—could bring in enough to help avoid the subsidy trap. Another option would be a tax on corporate profits if the IRS can figure out a way to make sure companies can't pull con games and hide profits.

➤ ***Scope of benefits.***

What's essential to control costs and cover everyone equally is to ensure we avoid the troubles Medicare and Medicaid have run into: paying too little for preventive care and too much for fancy treatments. What is not sensible is trying to control costs by excluding certain benefits, which is the way managed care works now.

The real problems have to do with how many services—like MRIs or C-sections—are used, how often, and at what prices, not what benefits are covered. In the right kind of scheme, hospitals get a global budget and decide there, on the ground with doctors and administrators, how to spend the money. And smart systems don't say you can only admit people to the hospital, for example, with three symptoms, because close calls would produce a windfall for lawyers and litigation. Decisions should be made on who needs what treatment, within reason, not ability to pay or definitional tidiness.

One benefit that's disappearing in the current system and which managed competition will make worse is free patient choice of providers. Most Americans want the freedom to choose their doctors and other professionals without interference, whether from HMOs, insurance firms, or government agencies. Moreover, American doctors understandably want freedom to provide care without intrusive second-guessing or distracting oversight. Single payer eliminates that worry.

Another bureaucratic nightmare waiting to happen in managed competition is administering a multi-tiered system. If the affluent are going to be able to buy different, better coverage than others, that automatically entails a different set of forms and rules, increasing the administrative complexity. Think of your own internist's office. Remember the days when it seemed there was just a nurse and a receptionist handling all the paperwork? These days the space behind the reception counter is more likely to resemble a data-processing center at IBM, with people buried in files and forms. Managed competition, with different tiers and continuing multiple insurers, guarantees the problem will stay the same. The lesson is clear: Once you get intricate subsidies or separate tiers of coverage, mind-boggling complexity results.

● ***Administration.***

Because Clinton failed to go to a single payer system in which the government, in negotiation with doctors and hospitals, would set budget limits and cap costs, he had to come up with another way to run his railroad. Alliances, or purchasing cooperatives of employers and individuals, were his solution. Quickly, however, a dismissive conventional wisdom took over. As early as March, Moynihan, on "Face the Nation," said alliances were "too big, too much government," essentially agreeing with Phil Gramm, who was saying much the same thing at the same hour on "This Week with David Brinkley."

But no one outside the single payer camp has come up with another way to accomplish the alliances' goals. Clintonian alliances, as Paul Starr has pointed out in *The New York Times*, seek to enhance personal choice of physician by removing the choice of insurance coverage from employers and giving employees the power to select competing plans through the alliance. Nevertheless, even ardent Clinton supporters acknowledge that the word "alliance" is, as one Senate Democrat put it, "toxic."

Rockefeller recently circulated a memo on alliances to the members of the Senate Finance Committee pointing out that if you take any alternative to an alliance—individual mandates, voluntary participation, whatever—you are embarking on a more burdensome and regulatory plan. Chafee, for example, sticks the burden of administering his plan on Washington and the state governments, not the alliances. If states that opt for managed competition don't have alliances, they will essentially have the status quo. And voluntary alliances make about as much sense as voluntary speed limits: The public good depends on bringing health costs into line so that everyone will be covered and the country won't go bankrupt. Nothing should be "voluntary" about that.

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The problem with whatever bill is likely to emerge is that it will exacerbate an already terrible situation when a simple, effective alternative—single payer—was sitting right in front of Washington's face, only to be ignored. At the moment, 70 percent of Americans with health insurance are in some form of managed care. This means doctors are harassed by insurance overseers, patients are denied access to the physicians they want, and more and more people—new mothers, for example—are being sent home after 24 hours to clear the bed. This is the status quo; single payer or its equivalent would reverse it, not make it worse. This is the point Americans must begin to see.

Proposals that would adapt Canada's system to the United States could, contrary to the conventional wisdom, be considered conservative. After all, they require little change in how physicians, hospitals, and patients deliver and receive medical care. Patients would choose doctors; physician practice patterns would not be disturbed; we could save, according to the Congressional Budget Office, as much as $100 billion in paperwork and administration that could be invested in job-creating enterprises to take up slack from the near-abolition of the private health insurance industry. In terms of *medical* care, then—the thing most people worry about—single payer is the sensible, conservative alternative. And financially it is the soundest way to control costs. Budget limits can be used in states that opt for single payer or other variants. The managed competition crowd hates them because if, as international experience clearly suggests, a single payer state next door to a managed competition state controls costs and satisfies its people better, then the tide could turn toward single payer.

This is the crossroads; no longer is reform the stuff of conferences and think tank ruminations. We could end the season in legislative stalemate, with majorities against every option for every manner of reason. Or we could end up with a majority for stripped-down Clinton ("Clinton Lite") which shares the aims but does not offer the means of large-scale reform. Clinton Lite, however, is not a lean plan but an inadequate one. Or ideally, we could have a bill with the right principles that permits enough state flexibility to experiment with different systems. This is not Clinton Lite but American federalism in the absence of a determined progressive majority in the Congress. □

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April 26, 1994

Dear Parents:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify particular questions/assumptions that have materialized over the past two days and which relate to the death of former President Richard M. Nixon:

1. The decision as to whether the American flag should be flown at half staff does not rest with local school districts. Direction for such action must come from the N.Y.S. Education Department through the local Board of Cooperative Educational Services, who in turn informs the various school districts.

2. For whatever reason it deemed appropriate, the State Education Department did not authorize that flags be flown at half staff on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Flags will be flown at half staff tomorrow, April 27th.

3. The fact that the flags have been flying at half staff on federal buildings has nothing to do with the public schools. The schools are under state jurisdiction and are not governed by the federal government.

4. Contrary to information being communicated by some children to their families, our schools will be open tomorrow, April 27th, as will all New York State public schools.

As a closing and additional piece of information, school districts may make individual decisions regarding flying the flag at half staff when local circumstances, such as the death of a staff member, warrant it.

Sincerely yours,

Laurence H. Johnson, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

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Death Comes to "Larry King Live"

In a send-up of a hot Washington TV ritual, the tobacco lobby's point man takes to the airwaves to make his pitch—and gets a killer call

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Christopher Buckley's new novel, Thank You For Smoking, *tells the story of Nick Naylor, chief spokesman for the fictional Academy for Tobacco Studies (the smoking lobby). Here, just after an interview on "Oprah" in which Naylor was confronted with a boy dying of cancer linked to secondhand smoke, he goes on "Larry King Live" to try to repair the damage.*

Sammy Najeeb, Larry King's producer and a force of nature, six-foot-something, big, hearty, came to fetch Nick in the reception area and take him to makeup. "I used to smoke like a chimney," she said.

"It's never too late to take it back up again," Nick said. "By the way, who's on the second segment?"

"You don't want to know," Sammy said.

Nick stopped. "Not the cancer kid?"

"No. This isn't Oprah. But you're in the right ballpark."

"Who?"

"Trust me, you won't have to be in the same room at the same time, I promise. It's all fixed. I gave instructions."

"Who?"

"It's Lorne Lutch."

"I'm on with the Tumbleweed Man? Are you *nuts*?"

"You're not on with anyone. It's two completely different segments. Look, it's not a setup, Larry wanted *you* on, then Atlanta said he had to put someone else from the other side on after, for balance."

"Balance," Nick muttered.

"It's gonna be fine. Larry *loved* what you did on Oprah. He's a fan. He used to smoke three packs a day."

"Hi there," said the makeup lady.

Fuming, Nick took his seat. "Have you got Innocent Bisque?"

"I'm out of Innocent," she said. "But Indigo is close."

Christopher Buckley is the editor of Forbes FYI *and the author, among other books, of* The White House Mess. *This is excerpted from* Thank You For Smoking, *© 1994 by Christopher Buckley. Reprinted by permission of Random House.*

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"All right. And Tawny Blush highlight."

Jesus, the Tumbleweed Man. For over 20 years the very symbol of America's smoking manhood in the saddle, his rugged, granite face on the back cover of every magazine, on billboards, on TV, in those happy bygone days. Now he was breathing through a hole in his throat and with every breath he had left—which was not many, thank God, according to Gomez O'Neal, the head of the Academy's intelligence unit—paving his way to the Pearly Gates by warning everyone about the evils of smoking. Ironically, it was Nick who had talked Total Tobacco Company management out of suing him for breach-of-faith, on the grounds that it would do no good to the industry's image to sue a dying man with three kids and 12 grandchildren, especially since his croaky pleas to the nation's youth not to smoke had made him a media darling (at least with the broadcast media since they couldn't accept cigarette ads anyway). Maybe, thought Nick bitterly, he could trot out this pathetic little detail in his defense tonight.

Sammy was hovering, as if she didn't trust him not to flee down the fire stairs with his makeup bib still on.

Larry King was very welcoming. "Good to see you. Thanks for coming."

"Pleasure," Nick said tightly. His trapezius muscles were hypercontracting. He was going to need a session with Dr. Wheat soon. He could use a session with Dr. Wheat right now.

"I used to smoke three packs a day," Larry said. "And you know something, I still miss it. We're gonna have a good show tonight. Lot of calls. Very emotional issue."

"I understand Lorne Lutch is on the second segment," Nick said.

Larry shrugged. "I know, but what can you do? Tell you something, though."

"What's that?"

"He's a nice guy."

"Yes, that's what we hear."

"By the way, you know what that hole is called? The one in the throat. Stoma. Must be Greek, right?"

"Undoubtedly." Nick screwed in his earpiece.

"Good evening everyone, I'm Larry King. My first guest tonight is Nick Naylor, chief spokesman for the tobacco lobby here in Washington, D.C. Good evening, Nick."

"Good evening, Larry."

"A couple of days ago you were on the *Oprah* show and stirred up quite a fuss, right?"

"Apparently, Larry."

"And now the secretary of Health and Human Services and the surgeon general are calling for you to be fired, I understand. Kind of rare, isn't it?"

"Well those two aren't exactly unbiased when it comes to tobacco. Actually, I would have thought they would have been pleased by our announcement that our industry is prepared to spend five million dollars on a very high-level campaign to keep underage kids from smoking. But I guess politics got in the way. Too bad."

"Lot of money, five million."

"You bet it is, Larry."

"Let me ask you something, Nick. Smoking is bad for you right? I mean. . ."

"No, Larry, actually that's not true."

"I used to smoke like a chimney and I had three heart attacks and bypass surgery. My doctor told me I could either go on smoking or die."

"I wouldn't be comfortable discussing your medical history, Larry. I don't know what the incidence of heart disease is in the King family. I'm certainly happy that you're feeling better. But if I could steer us a little away from the anecdotal and toward the more scientific, the fact is 96 percent of heavy smokers never get seriously ill."

"Isn't that a little hard to believe?"

"They get colds and, you know, headaches and the normal sort of things, bunions"—*Bunions?*—"but they don't get seriously ill."

"Where does that figure come from?"

"From the National Institutes of Health, right here in Bethesda, Maryland." Let NIH deny it tomorrow; tomorrow people would be on to the next thing, Bosnia, tax increases, Sharon Stone's new movie, Patti Davis's latest novel about what a bitch her mother was. As long as he was at it,

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he threw in: "And from the Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, Georgia."

"That *is* news," Larry shrugged. Larry was basically too polite to accuse his guests of being shameless liars. It was probably why Ross Perot liked him so much. With any luck, no one from NIH or CDC would be watching.

"Of course," Nick said, "neither Secretary Furioso nor the surgeon general, both of whom continue to refuse to debate with me on the merits of the issues, want you to know that or their budgets will go down. Sad, but true."

"Interesting."

"There are a lot of things," Nick sighed in a world-weary way, "that the government doesn't want people to know about tobacco. Such as. . ." —*What?*—". . . the indisputable fact that it retards the onset of Parkinson's disease."

"So we should wait till we're 65 and then start smoking like crazy?"

"Well, Larry, we don't advocate that anyone should take up smoking. We're just here to provide the scientific facts. Like the report that just came out showing that tobacco smoke is replenishing the ozone that has been lost due to chloroflorocarbons."

"Really?" Larry said. "Well, maybe I should take it up again, do my part for the ozone hole. I better check with my doctor first."

"Doctors tend to have their own agendas. I'd also like to call to your attention the report last week that smokers who are clerical workers tend to get less carpal tunnel syndrome, you know, the wrist thing, because they take more breaks. There's something else the quote medical science establishment unquote doesn't want you to know about."

"We're going to take some calls. Spokane, Washington, you're on the air."

"Hello?"

"You're on *Larry King Live*."

"Oh. Uh, yes, hello."

"Do you have a question?"

"Yes. I would like to ask your guest how he can live with himself."

"I take it you don't approve of what he does."

"I think he's a criminal, Larry. He should be locked up. Or worse. There should be a death penalty for what he does."

"Nick, care to comment?"

"Not really, Larry."

"Blue Hill, Maine, you're on the air."

"Yes, I smoked for many, many, *many* years. And then I developed these like, lumps?" Oh-oh. "And the doctor said it was from smoking, so I gave it up, but the lumps still didn't go away, so I'm thinking about taking it up again."

"Uh-huh," Larry said. "And your question?"

"The doctor who told me that was a young fellah and I think he just told me that to get me to give up. I don't think the lumps had anything to do with smoking."

"Okay, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, you're on the air."

"I smoke and it hasn't made me sick. I'll tell you what made me sick is drinking Milwaukee public water. I thought I was going to die."

"Thanks. No one has a question tonight?" Larry looked over at Sammy in the booth, who gestured to say that they'd *said* they had questions.

"Okay, we need a question. Atlanta, Georgia"—Nick's gut went into Condition Red—"you're on the air."

"Thank you, Larry. I work for the Centers for Disease Control and I would like to try to correct the *extraordinary* misimpression that this. . . individual is trying to create. While it may be true that as many as 96 percent of smokers never get seriously ill, it simply does not follow that smoking is not dangerous. It is extremely dangerous. It is the number one preventable killer in the United States. There have been so far over 60,000 studies since the 1940s showing the link between smoking and disease. For this guy to claim that we're saying it's all right to smoke is just beyond immorality. It's grotesque."

"Nick?"

Nick cleared his throat. "If this gentleman wants to debate the *science*, I'm all for it. Our attitude has always been. . . bring on the data."

"He's lying through his teeth, Larry. That guy is lower than whalecrap."

"Well," Nick said, "it's a little difficult to carry on a rational discussion while being verbally abused. But abuse does seem to be the lot of the modern-day smoker." Oh yes, please, let's do shift this steaming pile away from ourselves. . . "They're scorned, victimized, shunned—if they're *lucky* they're shunned, most of them are actively abused. They have to huddle in doorways in the

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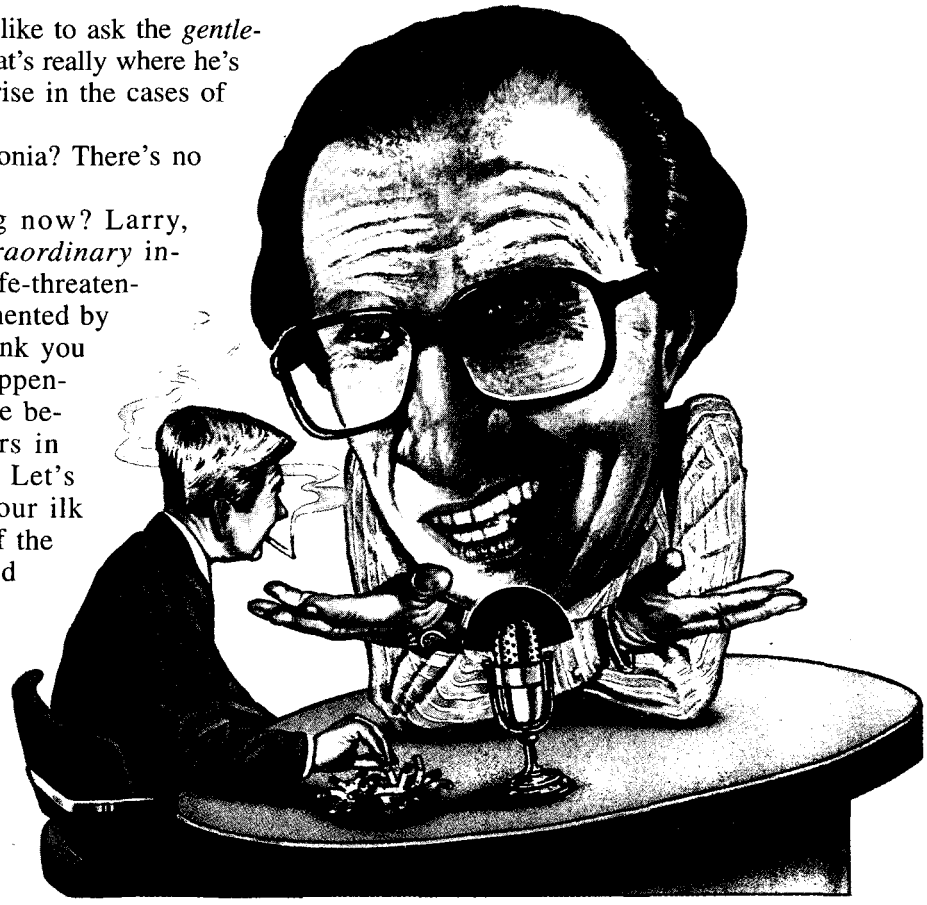
dead of winter. I would like to ask the *gentleman* from the CDC, if that's really where he's from, about the recent rise in the cases of pneumonia—"

"What rise in pneumonia? There's no rise in pneumonia."

"Hoh! Who's lying now? Larry, there has been an *extraordinary* increase in this ghastly, life-threatening disease, well documented by medical authorities, thank you very much, and it's happening because smokers are being forced out-of-doors in freezing temperatures. Let's face it, *sir*, you and your ilk have turned one-fifth of the population of the United States into lepers. Talk about your tyranny of the majority."

"I give up, Larry, I can't listen anymore, I'm going to get violent."

"Emotional issue," Larry said. "Herndon, Virginia."



Scott Gordley

"Yeess," said a man's voice with a nervous air to it, "I have a question for Mr. Naylor. I would like to ask him his opinion of these nicotine patches that so many people are wearing."

"Good question," Larry said.

"Yes it is. Frankly, sir, we at the Academy of Tobacco Studies are a little concerned about these things."

"Why?" said Larry. "They dispense nicotine into the system, same as cigarettes, and your position is that cigarettes aren't bad for you, right?"

"Well," Nick said, "your typical cigarette delivers a relatively minute amount of nicotine into your system, a very minute amount. Whereas one of these deadly little Band-Aids—"

"Hold on," Larry said, "you said 'deadly'?"

"Oh, absolutely. People have been dropping dead all over as a result of these patches. Even our previous caller, Dr. Doom down there in Atlanta, would admit to that."

"I read that some people who have kept on smoking after they started wearing the patches had heart attacks," said Larry. "But—"

"Well there you go. Heart attacks. I tell you something Larry, and Mr., sorry, I don't know your name, there in Herndon, I wouldn't let one of those things get *near* my skin."

"It's very interesting that you say that," said the voice. "I will certainly be careful with them. Larry, has anyone ever announced that they're going to kill someone on your show before?"

"No," said Larry, "but we do get a lot of angry calls."

"Then this is your lucky day, because I'm here to tell you that within a week, we're going to dispatch Mr. Naylor for all the pain and suffering he's caused in the world."

There was an awkward pause. "Wait a minute," Larry said, "are you threatening him?"

"Yes, Larry. I have really enjoyed talking with you. You have a very nice show." There was a click.

"Emotional issue," said Larry. □

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Life of a Salesman

What the triumphs and trials of capitalism's foot soldiers can teach us about what's right—and what's wrong—with the market

BY DAVID SEGAL

The Force
David Dorsey, *Random House, $23*

My own sales career began and ended in London a few years ago, when I was making cold calls on the phone for a storm window manufacturer. My job was to dial numbers from a photo-copied page of the London phone directory and deliver a scripted earful when someone had the bad luck to answer the phone; a commission was mine if a person agreed to let a salesman come by for a home demonstration. This sounded like easy shillings to me. Sitting down in a room full of phone reps that first night, I could smell the money.

I lasted four days. Most folks would rather I mailed them a bag of rats than force them to entertain a couple of salesmen with windows. And then there were all these weird rules. If you sent a salesman to the home of an Indian family—the sub-continental variety, that is—not only did you lose your commission for that lead, but you were docked a percent of your next one. The company president swore this wasn't racism but a cold business calculation. Indians, he told us, *never* buy, they just haggle ad nauseum. This stereotype, obviously an international one, surfaces in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, which David Mamet confected out of his year-long stint in a Chicago sales office. In the play, Shelly Levene knows he's despised by his supervisor when the only lead he gets is named "Patel," a name as Indian as Shapiro is Jewish. "*Patel*?" says a sympathetic colleague. "They gave you *Patel*?"

Odder still, we phone reps were told to use the name of someone famous. The theory was that if you started your spiel with, for instance, "Hello, this is John Gielgud" there might be several nanoseconds of confusion, sufficient time to get into your pitch and pique the listener's interest. Naturally, this didn't work. People were doubly annoyed; mad that it *wasn't* John Gielgud the actor, madder still that it *was* John Gielgud the salesman. The only fun of this was that a room of us sounded like a convention of psychotic celebrity wanna-bes, an endless cross-talking cacophony of "Hello, this is Diana Ross," "Hello, this is Denis Thatcher," and so on.

Unfortunately for the company, my performance was only a little worse than average. Job turnover was so high that the most senior phone rep had been there a grand total of three weeks, and the management used to pump our hands and say "Please come back" as we left each night.

But my sales career gave me an appreciation for just how ego-bruising this line of work can be. And, by spending some time around the salesmen who made home calls for the company, I learned this surprising fact: Salesmen are humans. These guys—they were all men—were neither foul-mouthed connivers nor pathetic buf-

Research assistance for this article was provided by Stryk Thomas.

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foons. Their work was difficult, but they were friendly, not particularly cynical about their jobs, and seemed to make a reasonable living.

Salesmen like these are hard to find in literature or plays, which is why David Dorsey's *The Force* is such an original contribution. The book follows a Xerox sales team in Cleveland through one year as it struggles to meet its company-mandated quota of selling $30 million worth of photocopying equipment. Most of the team is likeable and, measured against our preconceptions, unlikely. You expect hard-bitten types in bad suits; what you get are yuppies with unshattered personal lives and solidly middle class incomes. What they do is not brain surgery, but there is enough skill to the job that they can be said to do it well. They are not saints, but they're not criminals either. This will surprise the many of us who presume that most salesmen are either rotten people selling good stuff or good people selling rotten stuff. And it will surprise intellectuals for whom salesmen have long served as a respectable target of scorn.

Where do our prejudices about this profession come from? In part, from weasly salesmen, the kind who radiate an arch-cheeriness that lasts as long as your interest in their wares. (And not just for big ticket items. In this country, the only attractive women who will approach a man and say "Hi, how are you?" are the sales ladies at The Gap.) But to the extent that our preconceptions are wide of the mark, the problem is this: The profession has been hopelessly mythologized. In the popular American imagination there are two archetypal salesmen, both wildly inaccurate, each one laughably at odds with the other.

The first is Theater Salesman, so named because he comes to us via playwrights like Arthur Miller (*Death of a Salesman*), David Mamet (*Glengarry Glen Ross*), and Tennessee Williams (*The Last of My Solid Gold Watches*). Theater Salesman isn't making enough money, his family life is a shambles, he is either a ninny or a con artist, and he is usually overwhelmed by his circumstances. In most cases, Theater Salesman is one part a fully realized human being and one part polemical jab at capitalism. In *Death of a Salesman*, for instance, Willy Loman stands for the middle class company man who gets ground up by his own expectations and the system's heartless gears, and Ben, Willy's imagined brother, is the symbol of capitalist success at its most Darwinian and vulgar. In one scene, someone says "The jails are filled with fearless characters," causing Ben to exult with a slap on Willy's back, "So is the stock exchange, friend!" There's no explicit push for socialism in the play—just lots of garden imagery and the clear message that Willy is doomed by the barren soil of capitalism—but when the curtain falls you can't help feeling that the Loman family would have been better off in Sweden.

Salesmen are obvious dramatic fodder for critics of capitalism because they can easily be made to suffer the system's worst trials—an addiction to the rat race, the tyranny of an unfeeling boss, the pressures of sales goals. They don't *make* anything, which tends to be offensive to those artists who think men are meant to build and create. At the end of *Death of a Salesman*, Willy's son recalls how happy his father was putting in a new porch, finishing the cellar and adding that extra bath-

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room. (Willy's wife adds, "He was so wonderful with his hands.") And because salesmen just sell, they strut and fret as commerce's heartiest champions and most obliging loyalists, making their traumas an all the more damning indictment of the system they serve. They are capitalism's foot soldiers, vital but numerous enough to be expendable. Like all foot soldiers they are simple marks for tragedy and pathos.

On the other hand, there is Supersalesman, a stock character in the confidence-boosting literature for businessmen which peaked in popularity between the two world wars. The bards of this genre—Dale Carnegie, Wally Armbruster, Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone—tend to get embarrassingly carried away with the wonder of sales and salesmen. In *Where Have all the Salesmen Gone*?, for instance, Armbruster writes, "Supersalesmenship, I think, belongs up there with the arts. It's surely a practical art. And maybe the very highest form of human endeavor." Some of these writers thought selling so close to godliness that they believed several leading Biblical figures were in the trade. In Bruce Barton's 1925 national best-seller *The Man Nobody Knows,* Jesus Christ is recast as a brilliant sales motivator: "He picked twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." A pamphlet published by Metropolitan Casualty Insurance Company in the same era argued that Moses was "one of the greatest salesmen and real-estate promoters that ever lived."

Fawning Supersalesman character profiles pepper these works. In Hill's *Succeed and Grow Rich Through Persuasion*, there is the story of Delford Smith, who begins life, like all good rags-to-riches types, penniless in an orphange and then tugs on his bootstraps until he is a multi-millionaire. Not that money is everything to Delford Smith; he is renowned for his quiet generosity, love of family, and willingness to help others. In the book's introduction we learn that he is "one of those rare individuals that few of us have an opportunity to know more than once in a lifetime."

No doubt there are both Willy Lomans and Delford Smiths out there, but one suspects they are largely designed to, well, sell a particular message. By giving us a remarkably intimate window into the lives of salesmen, *The Force* convincingly confirms this suspicion. Dorsey explains in the introduction that he was allowed to shadow the sales team into meetings, lunches, sales calls, even into their homes. After he explains the set up, Dorsey vanishes the way makers of good documentaries vanish; he records the action but you never see him, giving *The Force* the feel of a non-fiction novel in the *In Cold Blood* vein. This gets awkward only when Dorsey hovers near the kind of intensely personal moments most of us wouldn't want a writer around to record. In one scene, for instance, we get a table-side view of a salesman and his wife on vacation as they discuss their marriage travails over an anniversary dinner.

When we meet the team, it is halfway through the year and is lagging well behind its targeted sales goal, sparking a frenetic six-month finish-line push. A lot hangs in the balance. For the regional manager, Frank Pacetta, failure could quash his chances of rising to a management spot at headquarters in Stamford, Connecticut. For sales team manager, Fred Thomas—the book's principal focus—failure means ending a 16-year streak in the hallowed President's Club, losing out on a trip to Palm Springs, and infuriating Frank Pacetta, who might otherwise help land him a less stressful job. For the sales team working for Thomas, reaching the goal means making money and getting Thomas off their backs.

The central drama in *The Force* is the tension between the $30 million sales quota and Xerox's company-wide push for "quality." To fully appreciate this tragi-comic struggle, you need to know that in the year the book chronicles, Xerox was still recovering from a near-death experience.

Gross Domestic Products

Back in the 1960s, Xerox was a Fortune 500 fairy tale come true. The company owned the rights to the newly developed photo-copier technology and set about mass manufacturing the world's first photo-copying machine. The original model, the 914 (named for the 9"

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by 14" paper it handled) was unwieldy and could only make seven copies per minute, but a market rapidly emerged. In 1961, the first year Xerox began pitching the 914, sales were $32 million. By 1968, sales were $1.25 billion. If the numbers had continued on that trajectory a bit longer, Xerox's business would have surpassed the United States' gross domestic product. By many reckonings, the 914 was among the most successful commercial ventures ever. Anyone who got in on the ground floor—anyone in the building, really—became a millionaire.

By the seventies, Xerox was huge, rich, and monopolized an enormous and growing market. Thus, it was ripe to commit blunders of legendary proportions. The biggest mistake was to make lousy photo-copiers. In the early seventies, Japanese companies like Ricoh, Sharp, Minolta, and Canon leapt into the market and nearly buried Xerox. In 1970, Xerox had 95 percent of America's business; by 1982 it had just 13 percent, a stunning decline. Like a lot of American industries in the seventies—auto and steel, for instance—Xerox made a product that was more expensive and less reliable, so much so that one Japanese manufacturer's commercials jokingly alleged that Xerox's products broke down so often you had to let the repair man live with you.

The other mistake occurred when its research wing invented the personal computer—and not some clunky prototype but the complete package including mouse, word-processing software, monitor, and laser printer—only to have management under-fund development of the product when bean counters complained about the cost of improving it. Xerox's scientists flipped the switch on "Alto," the first P.C., in 1973, years before IBM and Apple came out with their earliest models. In spite of its headstart, the company never made a dent in one of the largest consumer markets of the following years.

In the early eighties, when the company was poised for a heart attack, a former IBM mandarin named David T. Kearns ascended to the CEO's spot and began invasive surgery. You can learn about this man and the group of reformers who rescued the company in Kearn's relentlessly self-congratulatory *Prophets in the Dark: How Xerox Reinvented Itself and Beat Back the Japanese,* which is co-authored by fellow prophet David Nadler. For reasons the authors certainly don't intend, the book is disconcerting reading.

Kearns' remedy for Xerox is a push for "Total Quality Leadership." TQL isn't defined early in the book, but when you first read this nifty phrase, you imagine some esoteric management theory cooked up by men in lab coats wearing pocket protectors. You figure it has to be complex and controversial because there's a mighty tussle to get TQL introduced to the company. There are week-long retreats to discuss it, a Quality Improvement Team created to oversee it, and a search for an American consultant who can help them adopt it. Top executives scoff at TQL as "that quality thing," and only after a lot of arm-twisting and propagandizing does Kearns get a company-wide program of it going at Xerox, an ambitious, four-year plan in which some 100,000 people would be retrained.

You're ready to make TQL your personal credo until Kearns ends the suspense and finally explains what it is on page 169. Damned if it doesn't boil down to *make good stuff and don't rip off the customer.* Here's the heart of what Kearns called his "thirty second speech" for TQL: "Improving quality means understanding and working to satisfy the customer's requirements. Quality is meeting the customer's existing and latent requirements." This is an innovation? Had Xerox grown so sclerotic and complacent that asking employees to satisfy customer requirements entailed a top-down company revolution?

Apparently. Kearns' program works. Within a few years, machine reliability goes up, customer satisfaction ratings soar, the company gets back a few bites of its market share, and the Commerce Department gives Xerox the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award.

The Cleveland group is profoundly ambivalent about Kearns' quality kick. Most of the sales team is from the "old school" where customer satisfaction was irrelevant and moving the merchandise meant everything. In a chapter called "Quality," we see the more seasoned veterans grapple with TQL: "Fred

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sold for many years when the only guiding principle was to write as much business as possible as early as possible, by any means possible. They stopped at nothing; they did whatever it took to make their goal." The old school's rules had an elegant simplicity. When customers couldn't decide if they needed a photo-copier, *they certainly goddamn did*. When customers couldn't decide between one model and another, whichever cost more was pushed.

Under TQL, the sales team is supposed to be more like management consultants than hawkers, studying a customer's business, poring over its numbers, and learning about its floor plan and personnel. Effort is made to match the product to the needs of the customer. Before a contract is signed, the sales team offers to send executives of the larger companies to Xerox's headquarters for a few seminars on the quality gospel, all free of charge.

To some extent, this is good for sales. In several of the pitches we overhear, customers who initially held grudges against Xerox for its shabby past performance are won over by the sales team's knowledge and concern for their well being. And other customers are swayed and impressed by what they learn at seminars in the Stamford headquarters. But the Cleveland team cannot meet its goal by sticking to TQL. As the year goes by and pressure to close deals increases, Thomas rides his team harder, the team rides its customers harder, and pretty soon the quality talk is a charade.

When Xerox approved Dorsey's request for total access to one of its sales teams—an offer several other companies had declined—the grey suits in Stamford must have thought that he would generate some terrific company P.R. Not so. There is obviously some core sincerity to it, but by demanding ever larger sales figures each year, Xerox's national office, intentionally or not, turned TQL into a savvy update of the old school. "Everyone in Cleveland," writes Dorsey, "understood quality—at least everyone was going through the motions of serving the customer's requirements." The unpalatable truth is that caring about customers and maximum sales are two values that only occasionally coincide, and much of the book captures the team putting to use sleight-of-hand selling techniques to close deals. At one point, Thomas throws in a year's worth of free support supplies—like paper and ink cartridges—without telling the buyer that the cost of these supplies is already included in the out-years of the sales contract. (In the team's parlance, the cost of the supplies had been "baked" into the deal.)

Not that all of the Cleveland team is so mercenary. There is a striking visit late in the book with a customer named John O'Neill. He is too rattled and preoccupied to focus on the details of purchasing a photo-copier because his mother is in a nearby hospital dying of cancer. O'Neill, who runs a very small business out of his home, is in such a rush to tend to his mother that he will buy whatever salesman Larry Tyler recommends. Tyler must choose between making some money by selling a mid-price copier (which has far more features than O'Neil needs), or pushing the lowest-price copier and collecting next to no commission. O'Neill is writing a check for the more expensive machine when Tyler realizes he cannot lie to this man:

> "Listen, do people do reduction and enlargement a lot in my kind of business?" O'Neill asked.
> All Larry had to was say yes. He could lead John O'Neill anywhere.
> "No. You don't really need that feature," Larry said, halting the paperwork. . . It was going to be the smallest machine, the machine that really suited O'Neill's needs. He was going to make almost no money on this deal.

There are similar moments in the book, but usually the fight between the sales goal and moral reasoning is a one-sided drubbing. The goal suffuses the office with such nail-biting, kinetic energy and looms so portentously that it seems, at times, alive. To vanquish the goal is to live and prosper; to be vanquished by it, a form of ignominy and death. As a result, war metaphors abound. In Pacetta's lexicon, for instance, salesmen he likes are "assassins," deals they close are "hits," and when he fires someone he is "pulling the trigger."

What's most unnerving about the goal, how-

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ever, is Fred Thomas' sense that simply beating it is insufficient:

> A hundred percent wasn't good enough, according to the terms defined by the corporation and his own past performance. He needed twenty percent more than his annual budget to find himself flying to Palm Springs—and that was the only measure of success he was trained to accept.

When Thomas exceeds last year's mark by a certain percent, he then has to exceed the new and higher mark by a larger percent, thereby putting himself on the hook for an even better performance next year. It's a perverse, self-suffocating system because it pits employees against their own best lap times and makes last year's gold medal sprint barely good enough for honorable mention.

By the end of the book, Fred Thomas is burning out and begins wondering to what position, after over 20 years with the company, he might feasibly be promoted. He thinks his dream job—a position with no sales or quotas called "national account manager"—is a long shot, so, in one of the book's most poignant scenes, Thomas calls a former acquaintance who is a stock broker and asks what's required to get into the business. The idea is abandoned when he realizes that the math in the entrance exam may be beyond him.

Raw Deal

You find yourself pitying the sales team at moments like that, wishing their lives were easier. What's regrettable is that none of the folks we meet fit the mold of what could be called the Natural Salesman, another archetype of the profession, though one you are far more likely to actually meet in real life. Natural Salesmen are warm and real and they have the kind of magnetic personalities people love to be around. They sell a good product—one they don't need to lie about—and they aren't so hounded by the home office that they need to move more units than anyone is ready to buy. They make you realize that under the right circumstances the system can work. Their customer likes them, their goods are both high quality *and* needed.

Fred Thomas comes close to being a Natural Salesman, but Xerox's system forces him to hustle and deceive too much to be considered the genuine article. Like all the men and women on the team, he is a decent man placed under indecent pressure. Which ultimately is why *The Force*, in its quiet way, is also a critique of capitalism. The sales teams' lives would be reasonably appealing if they weren't constantly menaced by that $30 million albatross, a burden which forces them into shenanigans like "baking" the price of office supplies into deals. Publicly owned companies provoke Wall Street's disdain when profits aren't rising, so maximum returns are more important than fulfilled employees. And Xerox, one senses, is hardly the most heartless company out there, and its product—these days anyway—isn't so lousy that salesmen *have* to lie about it. We're left to guess what pinched and wearying lives are led by those toiling for less enlightened outfits and those that make inferior merchandise.

Then again, sales goals help Xerox stay afloat, beating back the Japanese, writing ever larger checks to its teams. And anyway, the Cleveland team signed up for the annual race and sticks around to run in it each year. At one point, Thomas contemplates taking a cut in pay to work elsewhere and then decides against it when he realizes that he loves his split-level house and his tony Cleveland suburb.

Of course, if you can do without the tony suburb and the house, there is another way. I knew a salesman who worked for the sort of low pressure outfits that didn't bother with tough quotas, and though he made a lot less money than the Xerox team, he had a pretty good time of it. For some 30 years my grandfather sold linoleum door-to-door, and later worked on the road for a company that made checkwriters. Because he had only modest sales goals, these were perfect jobs for him. He could earn as much money as he needed for his family and then use the rest of the time to do what he liked—read, watch a ball game at Fenway Park, meet his friends. If he made enough money by Wednesday, he had the other days off and that was a good week. If it took him until Friday, he had less time off. He liked his work because he liked peo-

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ple, but mostly because it suited the way he liked to live. He was sort of a free-lance capitalist.

Growing up, it seemed to me that the stereotypical scheming, materialistic salesman and Arthur Miller's loved but beaten Willy Loman, were about as far from my grandfather as men get. When he died, his estate was small enough to fit in the inside pocket of one of his sport jackets. And whereas Loman's funeral is a wretched, under-attended affair, proof positive that Willy had a thankless career and lived a joyless life, my grandfather's passing was a celebration of a man richly engaged with family and friends. Which suggests that if the job is done right—if one isn't consumed by never-enoughness, if one is not ruled by the sales goals that keep people like Fred Thomas on the treadmill—the death of a salesman isn't necessarily the stuff of tragedy. □

The Washington Monthly

JOURNALISM AWARD

FOR MARCH 1994
IS PRESENTED TO:

Greg Garland
The Baton Rouge (La.) Advocate

When Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards brought his favorite pastime—gambling—to his home state, the legislature was only too happy to go along, licensing gaming in both casinos and on riverboats. But in deference to the gaming business, lawmakers failed to enact effective penalties for casinos that allow people under 21 to gamble—an omission that opens the door to making Louisiana a magnet not only for underage drinkers (which it has long been) but also for underage gamblers. Garland's series delved into the licensing's fine print to discover that casinos caught letting kids gamble would be fined $500 to $1,000—laughably small penalties considering a casino's overall take. Is this a problem? Garland checked with New Jersey, which reports that Atlantic City casinos turned away 1.6 million juveniles from 1988 to 1992 and caught another 200,000 inside. And the series offered a way out—steeply graduated fines and license suspensions for sinning casinos.

Carol J. Loomis
Fortune

In a careful piece that tries to plumb the murky depths of financial "derivatives," Loomis admits the problem in her first sentence. "To all generally well-informed business people, a few words of semi-comfort about financial derivatives: First, if you don't understand what these are, don't fret. Most of your colleagues, top brass included, are equally baffled." She then goes on to make sense of the complicated subject, explaining what derivatives are—contracts, or bets, whose value is derived from the value of some underlying asset, such as currencies or commodities or indicators like interest rates—and why they are fast becoming the most potentially dangerous feature of the world economy. Right now, the outstanding value of derivatives is $16 trillion—nearly three times the U.S.'s GDP. Loomis illustrates the regulatory nightmare of trying to track incredibly complicated deals that put shareholders at risk. Fortunately, Rep. Jim Leach, the SEC, and the Financial Accounting Standards Board are exploring reforms.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

Nominations for stories published or aired in June will close July 15. The winner will be announced in the October issue.

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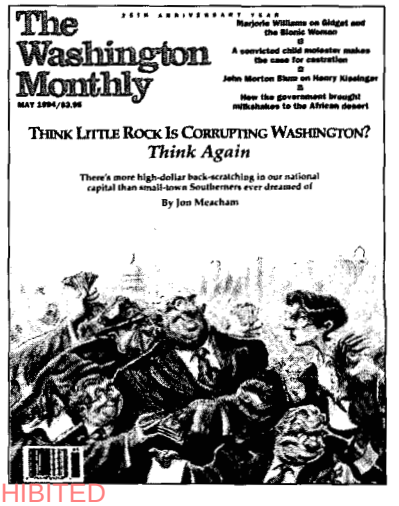

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Atomic Lies

An ex-KGB man's memoirs provide publishers with an object lesson on where not *to look for bombshell books about the Cold War*

BY PETER PRINGLE

Special Tasks
Pavel Sudoplatov and Anatoli Sudoplatov,
with Jerrold L. Schecter and Leona Schecter, *Little, Brown, $24.95*

No personal memoir from the fallen Soviet Union has generated such outrage among historians and academics in the West as former KGB general Pavel Sudoplatov's new *Special Tasks*. The focus of this outpouring is a single chapter, a mere 48 pages out of 509, which contains sensational charges of espionage against some of the century's greatest nuclear physicists, especially J. Robert Oppenheimer. *Time* magazine bought a huge extract of the book and ran it in April under the provocative title, "The Oppenheimer Files." Then, the backlash set in: "Book Saying U.S. Scientists Aided Soviet Atom Bomb Is Faulted," declared *The Washington Post*; even the Russian Intelligence Service, which replaced the KGB, moved quickly to denounce this revision of history by Sudoplatov, an old Stalinist hatchet man.

Without a stitch of official documentation, Sudoplatov boldly states that Oppenheimer, who built the American A-bomb, and his colleagues Enrico Fermi and Leo Szilard knowingly allowed nuclear secrets to pass from their highly sensitive U.S. laboratories to Moscow.

Within days of the book's publication this spring, historians and physicists hacked away at Sudoplatov's evidence until his case against the physicists is as bare as a Stalinist prosecutor's charge against a kulak. His accusations rest, it soon became clear, only on his say-so and on recollections of his short time spent in charge of the KGB's atomic research at the end of World War II.

Oral history is of course important, and especially so in the former Soviet Union, where so many documents were deliberately destroyed, falsified, or lost during the upheavals of the second Russian revolution. Any high-ranking official who comes forward to talk about a closed period like this one is a find for historians. Sudoplatov gives us his serial killer's perspective on Trotsky's assassination, on Raoul Wallenberg's death, and on the 1934 murder of Leningrad party leader Sergei Kirov. He also makes his own personal case for the rehabilitation of Lavrenti Beria by suggesting that Beria, Stalin's KGB chief, was not as evil as others have portrayed him.

But if the oral historians want to rewrite history and accuse famous dead scientists of treason, as is the case here, the charges must stand up to scrutiny. Otherwise, people will conclude the book is simply self-serving, either written to enhance the reputation of the author, or to make it more marketable, or both. In the case of *Special Tasks*, the offending chapter is a nasty smear that causes the entire book to fail even as oral history because Sudoplatov's voice is discredited. As such the book is a cautionary tale for publishers contemplating new Soviet memoirs—if they care to heed it.

Now 87, Sudoplatov is an assassin who joined the KGB at the age of 14 and eventually rose to be deputy chief of foreign intelligence. Along the way, he became a specialist in "wet affairs"—murder, terrorism, and sabotage. He personally elimi-

Peter Pringle is the New York correspondent for The Independent *of London and recently returned from two years in Moscow, where he was the newspaper's bureau chief. He is also the co-author of* The Nuclear Barons *and two other books on nuclear matters.*

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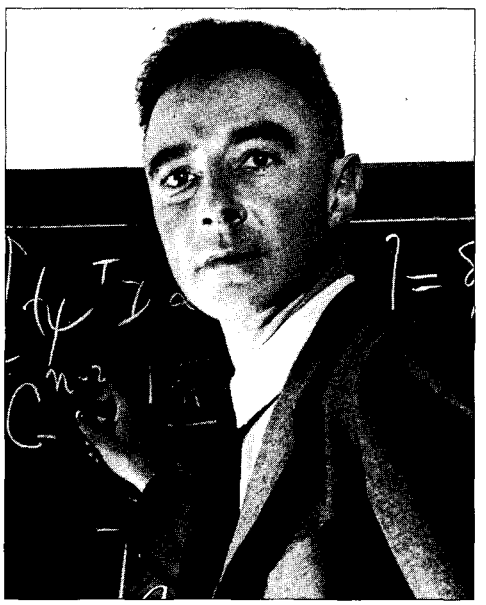
nated or arranged to dispose of as many members of the anti-Soviet opposition as Stalin decided were a hindrance to his dictatorship, including Trotsky. He remains a believer in the dream of communism and attributes its demise to what he regards as the lesser men who followed Stalin.

And yet the reader is invited to take seriously, and on trust, everything he says about the KGB having many more moles inside the Manhattan Project than anyone ever imagined. Here is a sample of the oddities, absurdities, and inconsistencies associated with those charges.

➤ Fermi was an Italian physicist, a refugee from Mussolini's fascism, who demonstrated the world's first nuclear chain reaction in a squash court underneath the University of Chicago's football stadium on December 2, 1942. In a well-known coded message, Fermi's boss, Arthur Compton, immediately rang James Conant, the president of Harvard and then head of the U.S. atomic project, to relay the stunning news: "The Italian navigator has just landed in the New World. He arrived sooner than he expected."



J. Robert Oppenheimer, circa 1940

In Sudoplatov's book there is an almost identical message, but the person who sends it is the atomic spy Bruno Pontecorvo (who defected to the Soviet Union in 1950), and the message goes to Moscow, not to Harvard. Could this be the real scoop? No. In fact, Pontecorvo wasn't even near Chicago at the time. He was then working for an oil-prospecting firm in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and began his atomic energy research only in 1943.

➤ As for the poor Leo Szilard, the bumptious Hungarian refugee physicist, he is accused by Sudoplatov of supplying the Soviets "vital information" from the Manhattan Project laboratories in Los Alamos. But Szilard never worked in Los Alamos. He worked for Fermi in Chicago.

➤ Because Oppenheimer was the director of Los Alamos—and because he was a well-known Communist sympathizer before the war—the charge against him is the most serious of Sudoplatov's and is to many the most credible. (Hence *Time*'s melodramatic headline.) Certainly, Oppenheimer had embraced left-wing causes on California campuses before the war and had married the widow of a member of the International Brigade, a man who had been killed in action in Spain in 1937. Moreover, Oppenheimer's security clearance was rescinded during the McCarthyite witch-hunts because of his past associations.

But the leap from such activities to spying, which Sudoplatov alleges, is unfair. No secret information coming out of Los Alamos had Oppenheimer's name on it, but Sudoplatov reveals with a nudge and a wink that the KGB gave Oppenheimer a codename: Star. A codename as evidence that Oppenheimer was a spy? In all secret services, principals have codenames, including the president of the United States.

Further on, Sudoplatov "reveals" that Oppenheimer was a soft touch for Moscow because as a concerned scientist he thought that a nuclear arms race could be prevented by spreading atomic secrets. According to this view, every country could have a bomb if they wanted one, and the result would be military stalemate.

Oppenheimer and others *did* promote international sharing of atomic information—but only *after* they had built the bomb. During the war, Oppenheimer resisted approaches from Communist sympathizers to improve scientific cooperation between Russia and America and in fact reported those contacts to U.S. authorities.

Sudoplatov accuses Oppenheimer of allowing Soviet moles to sift through his and everyone else's secret files, and it is true that Oppenheimer successfully resisted work at Los Alamos being "compartmentalized." But Oppenheimer's argument, which worked for the U.S. project, was that everyone needed to know what the others were doing if the bomb was going to be built before Germany's. Such

Los Alamos National Laboratory

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an argument does not make Oppenheimer a spy—if anything, it affirms his management wisdom.

In one instance of Oppenheimer's alleged espionage activities, Sudoplatov writes that before the Manhattan project began, at lunch in San Francisco with a Soviet agent, Oppenheimer revealed the existence of Einstein's famous 1939 letter to President Roosevelt warning of the military aspects of atomic fission and of the possibility of Germany making a bomb first.

The charge is that Oppenheimer was passing a great state secret in order to persuade the Kremlin to take the atomic bomb seriously and build one. Phooey. Here's what happened: The Americans had finally embarked on atomic work after a second letter to Roosevelt from Einstein in March 1940, and Roosevelt ordered the immediate classification of all research material on atomic matters. The Soviets soon began to notice the absence of Western research in the standard journals, and they deduced for themselves that censorship had been imposed because of the military implications of the work. Moscow did not need Oppenheimer, Fermi, Szilard, or anyone else to figure that one out.

But what is most disturbing about this book is the way the project was born. Because of his close association with Beria of the KGB, Sudoplatov was arrested and jailed for 15 years immediately after Beria's fall in 1953. In 1982, out of prison and seeking rehabilitation, Sudoplatov appealed to Yuri Andropov, detailing his work on atomic espionage and requesting that he be properly recognized and rewarded.

At the same time Sudoplatov was working on his memoirs, and by 1992 he was ready to publish. His son, Anatoli, gave an outline to Jerrold Schecter, who had been Moscow bureau chief for *Time* and was instrumental in the acquisition of Khruschev's memoirs. Schecter and his wife Leona, a literary agent, were to become special editorial aides to Sudoplatov.

"When we explained that most of the names in the outline were unfamiliar to Western readers," the Schecters write in their introduction to *Special Tasks*, "Anatoli responded by showing us his father's original appeal for rehabilitation, which contained the names of Trotsky, Oppenheimer, Fermi, Fuchs, and Bohr. . . others poured out. . . the dam burst on long-held intelligence secrets."

What the Schecters seem to have done, without any further documentation and relying on Sudoplatov's say-so, was to assist in the publication of the now notorious Chapter Seven, uncompromisingly entitled "Atomic Spies."

The Schecters are defiant. They point out that spies don't file documents for the benefit of historians. And, in a *Washington Post* op-ed, they add that "the more successful and sensitive an operation, the fewer the records." All of this is undoubtedly true, but at the same time, they promise, "Documents proving Sudoplatov's oral history are in the Moscow archives and eventually will emerge."

How can they be so sure? The Russian Intelligence Service seems to have gotten to the archives before them and has called the book "a mosaic of truthful events, semi-truths, and open inventions." In a May statement the agency said, "Allegations that Soviet intelligence received information on the atomic bomb directly from such noted scientists as Enrico Fermi, Leo Szilard, Robert Oppenheimer, and others do not correspond to reality."

Sudoplatov and the Schecters will surely pick up on the word "directly" and point out that they never said that, which is correct. But the Schecters can't have it both ways. Under attack for the charges against Oppenheimer, their standard defense is to quote Sudoplatov's appeal to Andropov, including the scientists' names. They even reproduce the appeal as an important document in the appendix of the book.

But what exactly did Sudoplatov say on his own behalf? He said, "Department S (Sudoplatov's special tasks group) rendered considerable help to our scientists by giving them the latest materials on atom bomb research, obtained from such *sources* [my italics] as the famous nuclear scientists R. Oppenheimer, E. Fermi, K. Fuchs, and others."

Sources? What kind of sources? Were their names at the top of a research paper someone stole? Or headed notepaper, perhaps? From this vague guilt by association Oppenheimer and others are to become known as spies. The Schecters claim "the book was done according to journalistic and historical standards," but in the face of new evidence they, and Sudoplatov, are as unrepentant and wedded to their original text, deficient though it is, as an old Communist is to the worn pages of *Das Kapital*.

To borrow a phrase from the Cold War, there is a clear and present danger to the revisions of Soviet history by Westerners who wander the streets of Moscow picking up butt-ends from old KGB agents. □

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How Vietnam Came to Main Street

An all too dispassionate study of the war's effect on the fabric of community shows how Vietnam devastated a small town in Kentucky which lost 16 young men

BY BILL KOVACH

The Sons of Bardstown: 25 Years in an American Town
Jim Wilson, *Crown, $22*

The American military involvement in Vietnam was insidious, beginning inconspicuously with a handful of military advisors in 1950. When it ended a quarter of a century later, Vietnam had reshaped our national life, exhausted our national confidence, and taught us finally to count the costs of power.

Our military hesitancy in Bosnia, despite recent cheap thrills in Grenada and Panama, is one of Vietnam's practical legacies. But only artists can tote the deeper costs to the American spirit. Like an untutored child confronting the algebraic unknown, solving Vietnam still tests the strengths and skills of writers and artists.

In *The Sons of Bardstown*, Jim Wilson joins the growing list of those who have tried to measure the full extent of those costs. Artistic ingenuity was required of the others who have also made the attempt. George Crumb, the West Virginia composer, reinterpreted the classical quartet form to produce "Black Angel." With a new collection of sounds he plumbs the depths of the war's disfigurement of the individual psyche in a work currently attracting a new generation to classical music. And Francis Ford Coppola had to reach back to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to find a vocabulary powerful enough for his needs when filming *Apocalypse Now*.

Wilson's effort is much different. His approach is the same direct, reportorial style he used when writing *Retreat Hell!* in 1987. That book, his first, described the struggle of American troops when they first confronted the Chinese army during the Korean War. In it, he dwelled on military costs and consequences. But for his second book he has chosen to tell a story of the toll of the war on a single community: Bardstown, Kentucky.

Bardstown has the setting for such a story. A town of less than 6,000, where lives are intertwined by connections of kinship, friendship, and geography. A town with a fierce independent streak, illustrated by its tradition of manufacturing moonshine whisky (today, licensed distilleries still produce Maker's Mark and Jim Beam bourbons). And a town imbued with a martial spirit, symbolized by the nearby armored calvary center at Fort Knox.

Bardstown has the history for such a story. Though never a community of more than a few thousand, it has sent more than its share of men to war. Fifty men from Bardstown joined the volunteers who followed Sam Houston and Davy Crockett from Tennessee to help Texas win its independence. One man returned. Bard-

Bill Kovach is curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University.

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stown's sons divided to fight on both sides in the War Between the States; its volunteers fought in Cuba, World Wars I and II, and Korea.

More important, beginning on April 11, 1968, Bardstown would produce the narrative for such a story. That was the day Lyndon Johnson's secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, announced a call up of 24,500 reserves and National Guardsmen—105 of them from Bardstown—10,000 of whom were to ship out to Southeast Asia immediately, since Tet had consumed the resources of our standing army and the country was being asked to give more. Wilson quotes the editor of the town's weekly newspaper, the *Kentucky Standard*: ". . . [W]e supported the idea because we felt like it was the thing to do. After all, you have a national administration that has a lot more information than you have, so, more or less, you put your faith in your leaders."

The perversity of the summons in April 1968 is enormous considering the historical moment. For this call-up came *after* Clifford had decided the war was unwinnable; *after* the critical White House meeting of the Wise Men on March 26 that finally convinced President Johnson that we had to get out of Vietnam; and *after* LBJ had

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

One encounter at the Vietnam Memorial

Because it was our first televised war, the men and women who fought in Vietnam were individualized. No longer merely chess pieces in an abstract strategic game, soldiers appeared in our homes nightly, engaged in flesh-and-blood carnage. As with previous wars, when the killing stopped we felt compelled to remember those who died. Memorials to our war dead are, after all, a ubiquitous piece of the American landscape. But the war in Vietnam is the first from which we collected the names of the dead on a single roll call in a single place.

With a magnetic power, the black wall of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington draws visitors to it. For those who come, there is almost always a need to tell the story of a familiar name they find inscribed there. It is part of some lesson we seem to have promised ourselves to learn from this memorial. One of my stories is the story of Homer L. Pease, a big red-headed tackle on our high school football team in Johnson City, Tennessee. In 1950, when I met him, Homer was finishing a high school education interrupted by World War II. He had lied about his age and at 15 had survived the Battle of the Bulge with the 101st Airborne. Homer pretty much controlled his side of the line in football games.

I left home the day I graduated from Science Hill High School to serve in the Navy during the Korean War, and then I went to college on the G.I. Bill. After college, on my first newspaper job, I uncovered a scheme to steal votes in an election. The stories led to several arrests, including that of Homer, my old teammate. Most of those involved were sentenced to jail, but because of his military record Homer was allowed to re-enlist instead. Later I heard he had a commission in the Green Berets, but then I lost track of him.

In the mid-1980s, when I worked in Washington for *The New York Times*, I paid my first visit to the Vietnam Memorial. The black wall seemed to grow organically out of the ground beside me as I slowly descended the path. Disoriented by the blur of names as I walked along, I stopped and tried to concentrate on the wall. Read a name, then a second. And then I found Homer again, etched there with the others in the polished black marble.

—Bill Kovach

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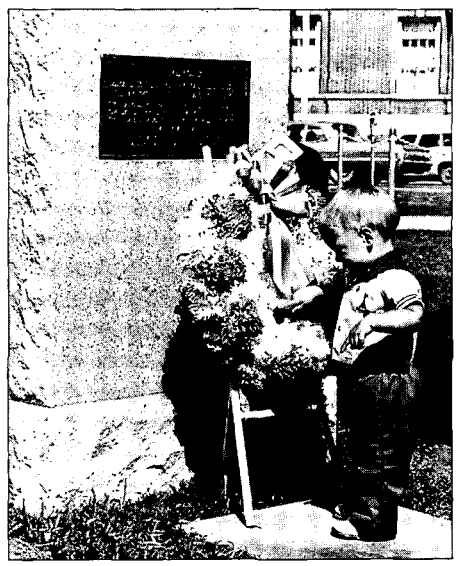
withdrawn from the 1968 presidential campaign. These men—the boys from Bardstown and from so many other towns and cities—were innocents conscripted to die in a war their government, at the highest levels, had secretly decided was lost.

At the time, the call-up changed the nature of the impression Vietnam made on many communities because it took men not individually but in unit-sized groups. On a small town like Bardstown, for example, taking 105 men in one blow was devastating. The fabric of that tightly woven place was suddenly ripped apart as young fathers, husbands-to-be, college students, craft apprentices, and entrepreneurs were shipped to Fort Hood, Texas. The men of Battery C of the 113th Artillery from Bardstown were suddenly on their way to fight in a war they hardly knew beyond the flickering images on television at the evening news hour. Wilson describes it as a belated announcement of the war: "Bardstown would become a symbol of how deep into America the war had reached, and few, if any, communities in this land felt the impact of the war as did the people here."



A Bardstown war memorial

In Vietnam the 113th Artillery became known as a spirited and effective unit. But in time its men were bored with routine and became casual about security. On June 19, 1969, on a hill called Fire Base Tomahawk, Viet Cong troops attacked the base with rocket-propelled grenades and AK-47s. Explosions ripped the ammunition storage area, bunkers, weapons pits, ammunition carriers, trucks, and artillery pieces. In a matter of minutes in that furious melee in the darkness, 10 men in Battery C were killed and 45 wounded. Half of the dead were guardsmen from Bardstown.

Within days, first one and then another olive drab army car appeared driving slowly through Bardstown's streets. Each carried two officers, one an Army chaplain. Word spread that something terrible was visiting the community.

"People actually positioned themselves at the roads leading into Bardstown from Fort Knox, and if an Army sedan with two officers in it showed up, they'd call ahead and alert the townspeople that more bad news was coming," one resident recalls. "Then someone would follow them to see where it stopped, and it wasn't but 10 minutes later that the whole town knew about it."

Before the claim on Bardstown would be complete, Vietnam's toll would be 16. Five of those died in the single action at Fire Base Tomahawk; by some accounts, that figure ought to be six—the mother of two casualties shot herself to death with a shotgun at home after the news came.

As Wilson writes in a defining vignette, a member of Battery C some years later "[S]tood before the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. As he made rubbing after rubbing of names on the wall, a woman ventured forward and asked, 'Sir, you couldn't possibly know all those people.'

"'Yes, ma'am,' he answered, 'I surely do. I know every one of them personally.'"

These elements and many more fill the pages of *The Sons of Bardstown*. As you can see, Bardstown would seem to have all the elements for a deeply textured and moral narrative. But for some reason the author does not work the material. Each incident is recorded with stenographic detachment, dutifully recording detail only. Wilson recoils from probing cause and effect, drawing a conclusion, or offering an insight. Although there are brief attempts to develop a dramatic tension in the book, the author is generally content to let events speak for themselves. But we come to retrospective works of non-fiction for more than a journalistic account. The writer has an obligation to help us to an understanding we might otherwise have overlooked. Maybe he thought the sons of Bardstown needed no interpretation. But the cost of the war individually and collectively demands deeper understanding when it is addressed. □

Neil Cornett

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The Original Material Girl

How did a middle class girl from the British countryside become U.S. ambassador to France? According to a new biography, it took endless scheming and countless liaisons with rich and powerful men

BY SANDRA McELWAINE

Life of the Party
Christopher Ogden, *Little, Brown, $24.95*

Trust me on this one: If you are a devotee of *Vanity Fair*, *W*, or the late, departed *Spy*, you will undoubtedly become hooked on *Life of the Party*, an unauthorized biography about the consummate 20th century adventuress, Pamela Digby Churchill Hayward Harriman.

If you wonder whether an obscure, well bred British country woman can find happiness in the beds of a slew of international power players, the answer is yes. But only if they are very rich, very social, and very, very, prominent.

The rise of the fair and notorious Pamela, born in 1920, begins more than 50 years ago in the promiscuous years of war-torn London with her brief, tempestuous marriage to Winston Churchill's son Randolph. A glamorous, single-minded, seductive 18-year-old, she quickly eschewed connubial bliss with her impecunious and volatile husband—whom she had married in 1939 just three weeks after meeting him—and set her sights on more celebrated game. Pamela then launched a dazzling career of sexual dalliances that terrified married women on both sides of the Atlantic and earned her the title "Courtesan of the Century."

Sandra McElwaine is a Washington writer.

In an unusual disclaimer in the front of the book, the author, *Time* contributor Christopher Ogden, explains that he and Pamela set out to tell her titillating tale together, but she got cold feet when she realized that for Little, Brown's multi-million dollar advance, she would be expected to tell all. She subsequently backed out of the deal. Although Ogden had 40 hours of intimate tapes, he says he was happy to pull out, too, until the Queen Mother of the Clinton administration (as *New York* magazine calls her) imperiously refused to pay him a sou, not even expenses. So Ogden decided to press on without her, interviewing old lovers and their spiteful wives, former butlers and maids, disgruntled stepchildren, along with friends, unhappy relatives, and a raft of doting political allies.

The result is mirthless and heavy handed, but Ogden does dish, and he has allegedly enraged the multi-talented Pamela, who through guile and extensive political fundraising now resides in an opulent residence in Paris as U.S. ambassador to France.

How did this voluptuous young woman with a minimum of education propel herself from the drab countryside of wartime England to the lavish palaces of Europe to the pinnacle of power in the U.S.? To put it bluntly, through rat-like cunning and sex.

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Her illustrious lovers are so numerous they boggle the mind, and Ogden entitles several chapters with their first names. (I find this hard to believe, but those in the know claim the names Ogden names are merely the tip of the iceberg. Several studs still remain stashed in the closet.)

After a few admirals and generals, her first major conquest, whom she was eventually to marry, was Averell Harriman, a then-married statesman 30 years her senior and heir to a vast railroad fortune. Despite a torrid affair, Harriman had no intention of divorcing his wife, but he did not love and leave Pamela. There was a stipend, supposedly $20,000 a year, for many years to come.

After Harriman decamped, Pamela dallied with CBS mogul Bill Paley and wealthy socialite Jock Whitney before hooking up with CBS broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, who was married at the time. Murrow contemplated divorce and proposed marriage, but in the end, like so many of her beaux, he reneged and unceremoniously dumped her.

Divorced, with a five-year-old son, Winston, whom she had virtually ignored since birth, and with no prospective home to wreck, Pamela broadened her circle. For a little sport sex, she seduced Aly Khan, the exotic playboy, in the late forties.

"Race, creed or national origin was no impediment for Pamela," writes Ogden. "She was never a racist, never anti-Semitic, prejudiced only against boors and bores. If a man interested her, that was sufficient. Christians, Moslems, Jews, atheists, and agnostics: She was an equal opportunity playgirl and eventually sampled them all."

Religion did rear its head, however, in her next relationship, this one with Fiat giant Gianni Agnelli, a leading European bachelor who installed her in a stunning villa in the South of France. To corral the cocaine-sniffing Italian stallion, Pamela abandoned the Church of England, converted to Catholicism—Agnelli's faith—and had her marriage to Randolph annulled. (But tellingly, she did not shed the prestigious Churchill surname.) All, alas, to no avail. Agnelli left his mistress of four years to marry a swan-necked Princess whom he had already impregnated.

On the prowl again, Pamela moved to Paris and set her sights on another married, wealthy patron, Elie de Rothchild, scion of one of Europe's most distinguished families. He showered her with gowns, jewels, and antiques for six years before trotting back to his wife and a much younger mistress.

Apparently Pamela, at this point in her European career, was considered soiled goods and not a good candidate for marriage.

Seeking more fertile, forgiving territory, Pamela chucked the old world for the new and set sail for Manhattan in the early sixties, where, on a blind date, she snagged theatrical producer Leland Hayward while his wife Slim was out of town. Hayward reported that Pamela was great in bed, could do sensational tricks with ice cubes, and asked her to marry him. Although Hayward did not meet her usual standards—he was not filthy rich or an international star—he was well connected and, most important, he was ready and willing to ditch his spouse. Without a moment's hesitation, Pamela sped toward the altar.

After Hayward's death in 1970, an ensuing

Scott Gordley

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nasty family feud, and a fling with Frank Sinatra—she moved into his house and had to be kicked out—Pamela finally landed her wartime paramour, Averell Harriman, who was now a widower and available at last.

Katharine Graham, then the publisher of *The Washington Post*, provided the connection. She gave a dinner in her Georgetown house and at Pamela's direction sat the two former lovers at different tables, back to back. (Mrs. Graham denies being part of any conspiracy with Pamela, but acknowledges the meeting took place at her house.) They quickly rekindled the old flame and were married within six months.

Party Girl

With the Harriman zillions now in her grasp, Pamela began to transform her image from trophy wife to woman of substance. She gave up her British citizenship, steeped herself in political and international issues, joined the Council on Foreign Relations, and became a Democratic fundraiser par excellence, pulling in $12 million for the party in the decade after its 1980 debacle. (Some of which paid for Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign and some of which helped elect the senators who would vote to confirm her as ambassador in 1993.)

After Harriman's death in 1986, she prepared for the future by slimming down, lifting her face, and revamping her coiffure. She then took up with her first boy toy, J. Carter Brown, chairman of the National Gallery of Art, 14 years her junior. Their liaison was brief, and at 72, with no man in sight, the merry widow called in her chits and wangled the plum post of ambassador to France.

You do not need a crystal ball to see the TV miniseries on the horizon: John Forsyth will play Averell Harriman; Omar Sharif, Aly Khan; Pierce Brosnan, Edward R. Murrow; Marcello Mastroianni, Gianni Agnelli. As for the Great Seductress, who else but Madonna? The quintessential Material Girl. □

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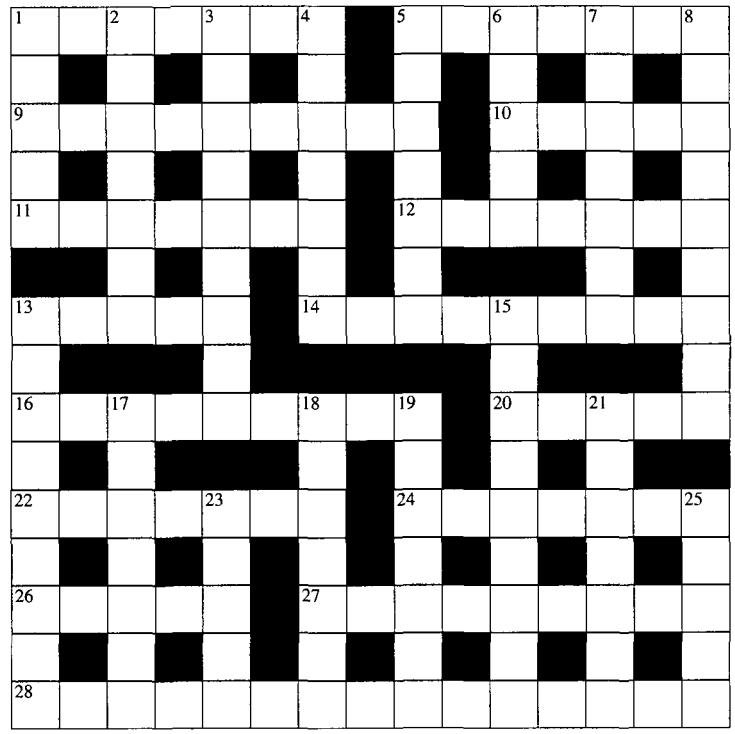
Political Puzzle

BY JOHN BARCLAY

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



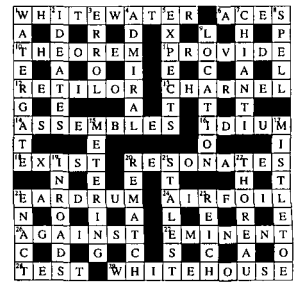
ACROSS

1 & 5. Now Aleuts pass a reorganization for Clinton target. (7,7)
9. Happening is twice nice spread around a difficult start. (9)
10. Go swimming in combat hero's wake. (5)
11. Mistakenly retire a part of Africa. (7)
12. Performance rating poorly retimed. (7)
13. Mysterious fever after five. (5)
14. Thin, yet still fat around the step. (6,3)
16. A small Soo developed for research site. (3,6)
20. Source of Spring sound we hear in addition. (5)
22. Theoretical part of venom in Alaska. (7)
24. Passed by, making no ridge. (7)
26. TV character staying in fifth block? (5)
27. Those with reach impediment are drunk a lot? (9)
28. Constitutional protection shaped Arab mother's grit. (5,2,4,4)

DOWN

1. New ideas on the back burner. (5)
2. Half of antiaircraft fire in rat leads to dismissal. (7)
3. Artificial lures lend market strategy instruction. (9)
4. Utensils mixing paints around middle of month. (3,4)
5. One exercising power led wire in new direction. (7)
6. Book showing graduate embracing good grade. (5)
7. Strange oration found near Detroit. (7)
8. Publication about Croat pets. (9)
13. Free love tuner performing. (9)
15. Convention figure composed New Mexico oration. (9)
17. Adding Greek letters back on dynasty. (7)
18. Creole shake (malt out). (7)
19. Haircut in English translation. (7)
21. Front puts first person in war damage. (4,3)
23. Obscurity is strange thing. (5)
25. Secretaries' responsibilities? (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Political Booknotes

Thank You for Smoking
Christopher Buckley
Random House, $22
By Alan Murray

The reason good Washington satire is so rare is that Washington does such a good job of satirizing itself. All you need to enjoy the performance is a television, a cable hook-up, and a remote control.

Click back a few days and there's First Lady Hillary Clinton, on "Larry King Live," having an intimate conversation with Second Lady Tipper Gore, who just *happened* to call in.

I love working with you so much, says Tipper. And I really love working with you, says Hillary. You've done *so* much to address the problems in the health care system, coos Tipper. Well it was *you* who did so much to advance the cause of mental health, gushes Hillary. This from a woman who a few days earlier was talking about protecting her "zone of privacy."

Click back to May 1 and there's Wayne LaPierre, head of the National Rifle Association, on "Meet the Press," inviting President Clinton, Treasury Secretary Bentsen, host Tim Russert and anyone else who's interested to come with him to the Fairfax Rod and Gun Club on Wednesday so he can show them graphically how the 19 assault weapons that Congress wants to ban don't make any bigger holes than those that wouldn't be banned. Just what that would prove is unclear, but Mr. LaPierre knows that persistence wins over logic in Washington. "Well, let's go to the range on Wednesday," he tells Senator Dianne Feinstein, who was also on the show. "Will you come to the range?" Senator Feinstein refuses to accept the invitation, leaving viewers to wonder—or so Mr. LaPierre hopes—what it is she's hiding from.

Now click back two months to "Nightline," where Linda Jenckes of the Health Insurance Association of America attempts to don a servant girl smile and tells millions of Americans: "You know, we actually support more in the president's proposal than probably any organization. We want health care reform." This after her organization just spent $10 million on the "Harry & Louise" ads that pilloried the Clinton plan.

But for anyone who fails to see the absurdities of life here, Christopher Buckley's *Thank You for Smoking* is a brilliant antidote. In this tale of a newsman-turned-tobacco-flack, Buckley shows himself to have an unmatched eye for the culture of Washington politics, media, and media manipulators.

The hero of this odd story is Nick Naylor, whose career as a TV newsman comes to an end on the day he happens to overhear a radio report that "Rover," the Secret Service's codename for the president, has choked to death on a piece of meat at Camp David. Naylor then goes on television and announces the president is dead. Turns out that the Rover who died was actually the marine commandant's dog, and Naylor winds up working for the tobacco industry.

His career there founders until he is invited to appear on "Oprah," where he tells a terminal cancer victim, and two anti-smoking activists, in Linda Jenckes fashion: "Look, we're all on the same side here."

Naylor and two friends who are lobbyists for the alcohol and firearms industry comprise an informal Mod Squad—short for "Merchants of Death"—and they verbally joust over which industry is most disliked, which gets the most hate mail, and which is responsible for more deaths.

All of this is told with a delicious eye for subtlety that comes from Buckley's own intimate knowledge of the capital, and he captures the faddish nature of what passes for serious debate in Washington. On a flight to Los Angeles, for instance, Naylor recognizes Barbra Streisand's "issues person," whom he heard had been flown in to brief the National Security Council on Barbra's position on the developing Syrian situation. "Richard Dreyfuss' issues person was also on board, having given a presentation to the cabinet on Richard's feelings about health care reform."

Lest all this serve only to feed already excessive public cynicism about Washington, it is worth pointing out that some of the nation's least savory special interests have been handed some major defeats in recent months. The once-mighty tobacco lobby is itself in turmoil as Congress moves to boost the federal tax on tobacco and to investigate charges that the tobacco industry put extra nicotine in its cigarettes. And the once-mighty National Rifle Association has been handed two recent defeats, with Congress passing the Brady Bill and the ban on certain assault weapons.

But such victories are notable because of their infrequency; there remains plenty of grist for satirists.

Thank You for Smoking and Buckley's previous book, *The White House Mess*, establish him as the city's preeminent satirist. And it just may be that satire will prove the most effective weapon against the purveyors of hypocrisy and cynicism. Bill Clinton

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may not have had much success in changing the culture of Washington, but perhaps Chris Buckley will.
Alan Murray is Washington bureau chief of The Wall Street Journal.

Certain Trumpets
Garry Wills
Simon and Schuster, $23
By Joseph A. Califano, Jr.
Garry Wills' 18th book is a series of vignettes about individuals he considers leaders in a catalogue of enterprises, counterpointed against snapshots of non-leaders—in the author's jargon, "antitypes."

Wills plays Franklin Roosevelt against Adlai Stevenson; Eleanor Roosevelt against Nancy Reagan; Ross Perot versus Roger Smith; Pope John XXIII against Celestine V (the only Pope forced to resign); Martha Graham against Madonna. Martin Luther King gets the leadership prize for rhetoric; Dorothy Day, the doyenne of the Catholic Worker movement, gets the gold for saintly leadership.

The book can be read as a series of selected short stories, and each category stands on its own. It is not, as was John Gardner's work *On Leadership*, an attempt to explore the elements of leadership and tap those of special relevance today. Wills admits that he offers little for those seeking to answer the question, "How am I to become a leader?"

The writing is lively, literate, and full of interesting tidbits about the lives of each person he caricatures as leader or antitype. But it's not until near the end that he zeroes in on two key questions in understanding effective leadership: "Leader of *whom*? Going *where*?"

Three recent presidents have profoundly affected our nation by their leadership—and each was quite different in style, in substance, and the issues on which he sought to lead. FDR faced the Great Depression and World War II; Lyndon Johnson, whom Wills dismisses as a "superb Senate leader" but "a poor president," revolutionized the nation with his commitment to civil rights (with laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, public accomodations, housing, and protecting voting rights, and his articulation of the concept of affirmative action and of the need for a war on poverty amidst such plenty). And he altered forever the role of the federal government (with Medicare, Medicaid, aid to elementary, secondary, and higher education, and environmental, consumer, and crime control laws). Later, Ronald Reagan set out to stem the expansion of the federal role in American life. By cutting taxes, he fenced Democrats into a budget corral that is likely to restrain domestic spending for the rest of the century. He brought millions of Americans under his conservative banner and shifted the center of American politics to the right

Where were these leaders going?

Roosevelt wanted to win a war and stamp out fascism and anti-Semitism—and he had a united nation behind him, as millions of young Americans went into the military, millions more worked in defense production at home, and Hollywood and the news media went after Hitler and his assault on the Jewish people with a single-mindedness inconceivable today. In FDR's time there were far sharper, widely accepted demarcations of good and evil; unlike today, not every idea was assumed to have some merit.

Johnson's goal was a society that acted in accord with its stated constitutional principles of equality and opportunity and justice for all. As he brought out of the closet 200 years of brutalizing blacks and exhorted the nation to right the wrongs, he tackled an issue so controversial and sought to change a feeling so deeply ingrained that it remains the nation's most divisive to this day.

Enter, in 1980, Reagan. His goal was to stop the federal government

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from getting more deeply into the pants of American society and business. He did it by making the issue lower taxes, appealing to the American resentment of government, and harnessing the libertarian streak in our people while fanning religious fervor among those eager to set moral and social standards for every American.

Who were these presidents' followers? For Roosevelt on the war it was all the people, but after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor that was as easy as crossing the untrafficked streets of 1941. By the late sixties, LBJ had spent the largest election plurality in history to help blacks and wage war in Vietnam, and he lost his conservative followers over civil rights and his liberal ones over the Vietnam War. Reagan's followers were white and conservative, with a core of evangelicals.

Leadership in our increasingly fragmented society, with its premium on aggressive pluralism—economic, social, cultural, and religious—is a more difficult task than at any time since the Civil War. I would add two attributes essential for leadership today: courage of conviction and credibility.

Which brings me to the question that I wish Wills, who has written so perceptively on Richard Nixon and Ted Kennedy, had confronted in this book: Why are we not producing the kinds of leaders that founded the nation and led it through its finest hours?

For me the answer rests, in part, with us, the followers. Wills puts it this way: "My book has missed its object if the role of the follower is made somehow less worthy than that of the leader." John Gardner makes a somewhat different point: ". . . [P]eople want to know whether the followers believe in the leader; a more searching question is whether the leader believes in the followers."

The recent adulation of Richard Nixon in death is revealing as to why the nation suffers from a dearth of leaders. The followers have gone well beyond paying due respect to the office and the man. They have chosen to adore a president who obstructed justice, was a criminal co-conspirator in an attempt to destroy the opposition political party, made a calculated judgment to exacerbate racism as part of his Southern strategy, and was the only president who had to resign in disgrace after the House Judiciary Committee, Republicans and Democrats alike, voted the first article of impeachment against him. In canonizing such a man, the followers have applied "deviancy down" (to borrow Pat Moynihan's vivid phrase) to leadership in America.

Bluntly put, American followers get the kind of leadership they deserve by the standards they set.

Joseph A. Califano, Jr. was President Johnson's top assistant for domestic affairs and President Carter's secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. He is founding chairman and president of the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

The Roosevelts: An American Saga

Peter Collier with David Horowitz
Simon and Schuster, $27.50

By Michael R. Beschloss

Since their days as the editors of *Ramparts* magazine in the 1960s (they have now renounced their radical backgrounds and support others who follow suit), Peter Collier and David Horowitz have written a substantial subliterature on American dynasties. Before they came to the subject, books on famous American families tended almost always toward antiquarianism. Breaking that mold, Collier and Horowitz have performed the extraordinary task of getting reticent people to talk about their lives, their minds, and their relatives as well as deconstructing the densely packed array of ambitions, anxieties, responsibilities, traumas, and opportunities thrown on the rich and famous from birth.

In *The Rockefellers* (1976), they showed how the great-grandchildren of John D. Rockefeller grew up to be wildly different from their patriarch and from one another, despite the strong efforts of that family's infrastructure to imprint them with common values, manners, and goals. Published just after the 1984 drug death of Robert Kennedy's son David, with whom the authors had spoken at length, *The Kennedys* showed the human cost that Joseph Kennedy's insatiable drives exacted from his children and grandchildren. *The Fords* (1987) was more cursory and brisk, largely because that family, on closer inspection, did not prove to have the intensity and depth that had allowed Collier and Horowitz to weave the two earlier tales, tales that were almost out of Thomas Mann.

The Roosevelts is at least a partial return to the tradition of their first two books. Despite the credit line, it has evidently been written by Collier alone (in his author's note, he thanks "my good old friend David Horowitz for his help in rounding up some of the material in the first stages of this book"). Mining the huge literature on Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt and sundry aspects of their families, as well as private papers and interviews with descendants, the book breaks with usual practice by treating the often bitterly opposed TR and FDR branches as one, closing with a 1989 Hyde Park rapprochement that family members gibed as "the Peace of Utrecht."

As with the earlier volumes, Collier is most interesting on the figures to whom history has paid less attention—for instance, Eleanor Roosevelt's father Elliott, who drank and was "the leading character in what had become the families' ongoing melodrama." Other characters are presented in new light: Eleanor's childhood "behavior was calculated to win sympathy, yet there was something in Eleanor—a combination of smugness, vulnerability, obtuseness, not to speak of an ability to absorb emotional pain—that made an individual like Alice [Roosevelt Longworth] want to punish her."

In stark colors, Collier portrays

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Franklin and Eleanor's deficiencies as parents, describing how FDR "mistakenly assumed" that his daughter and sons "would not feel entangled in the dark undergrowth of emotion that characterized his relationship to Eleanor." This "made the family, in Tolstoy's formulation, unhappy in its own distinctive way." FDR is shown as "a blithe spirit and a figure of tremendous power, yet paradoxically unable to protect [his children]—not from tyrannical nannies, not from their mother's painful deficits, and not from his own relentless desire to pretend everything was fine, his way of conserving the core of privacy he had won with such difficulty."

Collier renders the TR branch's antagonism toward FDR as president ("What they had been saying for almost twenty years" was that "the Hyde Park branch was not just an inferior copy of the original, but a forgery") as partially political, partially a sense of dethronement. He writes that the TR side felt that their name "was being degraded by the financial misdeeds and especially by the marital failures of those other Roosevelts." Those failures in marriage and commerce are presented here in full. As in Collier's earlier books, the most memorable passages in *The Roosevelts* concern the striving of later generations to defeat or conform to the standards set by the patriarch, usually falling short in both.

In this retelling, the descendants of TR trailed off: "It was always a matter of living with the memory of a man who seemed to ask them. . . what they had done with their lives and why they hadn't managed to be as happy and productive as he had been." The decline and fall of the FDR side was more fabulous. For instance, after bravery during World War II, son Elliott, trying to be a "big man," went through a number of wives, panhandled his mother and other family members for cash, wrote questionable "memoirs" about his parents with invented dialogue—making profits while cutting them down to size—then put his name on a series of cheap ghost-written "Eleanor Roosevelt Mysteries." (Of his books on his late mother, Elliott joked, "See, she's still supporting me after all these years.") In 1965, he vainly ran for mayor of Miami Beach and was rumored to be close to the gangster Meyer Lansky.

Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. is perhaps an even better emblem of the collapsed ambitions of the FDR line. Elected to Congress from New York City in a special election in 1949, endowed with his father's magnetism, looks, and voice, he was considered to be an almost certain future presidential nominee. Instead, lack of discipline and tactical skills killed his career in New York politics so that by 1960 he was reduced to exploiting his family name to help John Kennedy overcome the skepticism of West Virginia primary voters. As Charles Peters, the editor of this magazine, wrote in his autobiography, "Roosevelt had become a drunk, and now Kennedy was fulfilling FDR Jr.'s once bright promise."

While *The Roosevelts* lacks the grandeur and depth of the Collier-Horowitz treatments of the Rockefellers and Kennedys, it benefits from Collier's considerable intelligence and research skills. More than his earlier books, it demonstrates the strange paradox of political dynasties in a democracy: We long to give office to the descendants of great figures and then are somehow startled to discover that the offspring of self-absorbed and power-seeking figures do not always have the instincts and talents that leadership requires.

Michael R. Beschloss is the author, most recently, of The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960-1963 *(Harper, 1991).*

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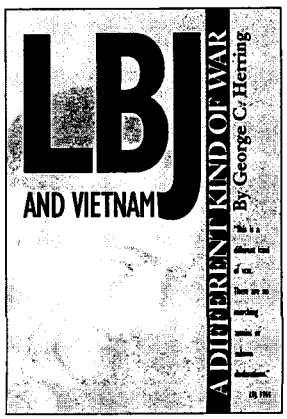

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